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REGIONAL COOPERATION

Report of the Secretary-General

SUMMARY

The present report covers the period from the second regular session of 1990 of the Economic and Social Council to the second regular session of 1991. During the first half of 1991, three of the five regional commissions held their regular sessions. The Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), after holding a resumed forty-fifth session on 14 December 1990, held its forty-sixth session in Geneva from 9 to 19 April; the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) held its forty-seventh session in Seoul from 1 to 10 April; and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) held the twenty-sixth session of the Commission and the 17th meeting of the Conference of Ministers in Addis Ababa from 9 to 13 May and the 12th meeting of the Technical Preparatory Committee of the Whole from 29 April to 7 May. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) does not meet in 1991. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) was scheduled to meet in April 1991, in accordance with its resolution 158 (XIV), in which the Commission decided that its sessions would normally be held biennially, but the session was postponed for one year in view of the situation in the region.

Until 1983, the report of the Secretary-General on regional cooperation included a section on major economic and social developments within the regions. Since similar information has been made available to the Council in

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* E/1991/100.

the summaries of the surveys of the five regions, it was decided to exclude that section from the report on regional cooperation (see "Summary of the economic survey of Europe, 1990-1991" (E/1991/64), "Summary of the economic and social survey of Asia and the Pacific, 1990" (E/1991/45), "Summary of the economic survey of Latin America and the Caribbean, 1990" (E/1991/56), "Summary of the survey of economic and social conditions in Africa, 1989-1990" (E/1991/70), "Summary of the survey of economic and social developments in the region of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, 1990" (E/1991/92)).

The present report contains five sections: section I.A deals with issues calling for action by the Economic and Social Council and section I.B with issues brought to its attention; section II highlights the work of the regional commissions; section III reports on the meetings of the executive secretaries of the regional commissions held during the year; section IV deals with interregional cooperation in the area of trade facilitation, pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolutions 1989/118 of 28 July 1989 and 1990/74 of 27 July 1990; section V deals with strengthening the role of the regional commissions to promote subregional, regional and interregional cooperation. This subject was selected by the Council at its organizational session, upon the joint recommendation of the executive secretaries, for in-depth consideration under the agenda item on regional cooperation.

The annual reports of ECE, ESCAP, and ECA will provide further background information on the matters dealt with in the present report; the report of ECE on its forty-sixth session will be issued as Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1991, Supplement No. 15 (E/1991/36); the report of ESCAP on its forty-seventh session as ibid., Supplement No. 14 (E/1991/35); and the report of ECA on the 17th meeting of the Conference of Ministers and on the twenty-sixth session of the Commission as ibid., Supplement No. 16 (E/1991/37).

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I. MATTERS CALLING FOR ACTION BY THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL OR BROUGHT TO ITS ATTENTION

A. Matters calling for action by the Council

1. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

1. During the forty-seventh session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Government of China offered to hold the forty-eighth session of the Commission at Beijing during the second half of April 1992 and agreed to bear all responsibility for the additional administrative, logistical and financial expenditure involved. The Commission unanimously decided to hold its forty-eighth session at Beijing, in accordance with paragraph 4 (f) of General Assembly resolution 40/243, subject to the approval of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly.

2. The Commission approved the following two draft resolutions pertaining to the membership of the Commission for adoption by the Economic and Social Council:

DRAFT RESOLUTION

Admission of Macau as an associate member of the Commission

The Economic and Social Council,

Noting that Macau has become an associate member of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific in accordance with paragraph 5 of the terms of reference of the Commission,

Decides to amend paragraphs 2 and 4 of the terms of reference of the Commission accordingly.

DRAFT RESOLUTION

Admission of Kiribati as a full member of the Commission

The Economic and Social Council,

Noting that Kiribati has become a member of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific,

Decides to amend paragraphs 3 and 4 of the terms of reference of the Commission accordingly.

3. In addition, in its resolution 47/11 on interregional cooperation in the area of trade facilitation, the Commission, in paragraph 2, requested the Economic and Social Council to endorse that resolution and make appropriate recommendation for funding by donors. The resolution read as follows:

"47/11. Interregional cooperation in the area of trade facilitation

"The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific,

"Conscious of the importance of trade facilitation measures as a means of making international trade efficient and cost-effective, and of the developments in new technologies and their application in the conduct of international trade,

"Recalling Economic and Social Council resolution 1989/118 on interregional cooperation for facilitation of international trade, in which the Council directed the regional commissions to formulate, jointly with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, a project proposal for interregional cooperation, including the detailing of the technical and resource requirements in the area of trade facilitation and, in particular, the phased application of the Rules for Electronic Data Interchange for Administration, Commerce and Transport (EDIFACT), wherever appropriate,

"Noting that the Economic and Social Council, at its session in July 1990, adopted resolution 1990/74, supporting the implementation of the project proposal on interregional cooperation by the participating African countries and requesting other regional commissions to further consider Council resolution 1989/118,

"Recalling the endorsement by the Commission, at its forty-sixth session, of the project concept and objectives for interregional cooperation in the area of trade facilitation, prepared in accordance with the directives contained in Economic and Social Council resolution 1989/118,

"Recognizing that the regional trade facilitation network of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific will soon be operative and that it will, inter alia, act as a focal point for trade facilitation efforts in the region,

"Conscious also of the fact that most of the developed and some developing economies in this region have either started or are endeavouring to adopt EDIFACT in the conduct of their international trade and that most of the developing economies still need urgent attention and assistance from the United Nations system in the rationalization of their trade documentation and procedures, and, thereafter, in taking appropriate steps towards the application of new technology in the transmission of trade documentation,

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"Also recognizing that the trade facilitation measures and electronic data interchange standards should be applied uniformly by all countries and that, to this end, the countries and areas of the Asian and the Pacific region need to cooperate effectively among themselves and with the rest of the world,

"1. Reiterates its endorsement of the four components and eight objectives of the project proposal on interregional cooperation in the area of trade facilitation, set out in the document on interregional cooperation in trade 1/ submitted to the Commission at its forty-sixth session;

"2. Requests the Economic and Social Council to endorse the present resolution and make appropriate recommendations for funding by donors;

"3. Requests the United Nations Development Programme, and other multilateral and bilateral donors, to provide adequate resources to ensure the full realization of the project;

"4. Invites all Members of the United Nations to support this project proposal;

"5. Requests the Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific to report to the Commission at its forty-eighth session on the implementation of the present resolution."

2. Economic Commission for Africa

4. At its seventeenth meeting, held in Addis Ababa from 9 to 13 May 1991, the Conference of Ministers approved the following three draft resolutions for adoption by the Council:

DRAFT RESOLUTION

Acceleration of the economic integration process in Africa and strengthening of the Multinational Programming and Operational Centres 2/

The Economic and Social Council,

Concerned about the slow process of economic integration at the subregional level as evidenced, inter alia, by the low level of

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1/ E/ESCAP/744.

2/ Resolution 708 (XXVI) of the Conference of Ministers of the Economic Commission for Africa.

intra-subregional trade, the persistence of customs barriers between the member States, the non-existence of common external tariff and the absence of harmonized sectoral policies in the fields of agriculture, industry, transport, energy, trade and monetary affairs,

Recalling resolution 611 (XXII) of 24 April 1987 of the Conference of Ministers of the Economic Commission for Africa on the acceleration of subregional economic integration in Africa and the new role of the Multinational Programming and Operational Centres in that process,

Recalling also resolution 702 (XXV) of 19 May 1990 of the Conference of Ministers of the Economic Commission for Africa on transforming and strengthening the Centres to enable them to play an effective role in providing technical assistance to the economic integration process in Africa,

Noting with satisfaction the endorsement by the General Assembly 3/ of the report of the Review Team on the Structures, Organization and Operations of the Multinational Programming and Operational Centres 4/ that the structures, organization and operations of the Centres be transformed and strengthened,

Conscious that the financial assistance of the United Nations Development Programme to the Centres during the period 1977 to 1982 has made a significant impact on the economic integration process in Africa, further accelerated by the funding of multisectoral projects by the United Nations Development Programme during its Fourth Programming Cycle,

Noting further with satisfaction the progress achieved in the preparation of the treaty establishing the African Economic Community, whose imminent signature will mark a historic milestone in the integration of Africa,

1. Appeals to member States of subregional economic communities to take appropriate measures for the acceleration of the subregional integration process, notably by endowing the subregional economic communities with self-financing mechanisms for the funding of their operational activities and by ensuring the participation of all socio-economic groups in the economic integration activities;

2. Further appeals to member States to adopt effective measures towards the setting up of mechanisms for economic integration in each subregion that would harmonize the activities of all economic groupings;

3. Invites member States to apply the decisions of the African Economic Community on joint policies in priority sectors and, in particular, those regarding the elimination of tariff and non-tariff barriers, the adoption of a common external tariff monetary integration;

3/ General Assembly resolution 45/248, sect. XI.

4/ E/ECA/CM.16/13.

4. Requests the United Nations Development Programme to provide, during its Fifth Programming Cycle, sufficient resources to support the economic integration process in Africa, in particular to fund activities in priority areas which were not properly covered during the Fourth Programming Cycle and to sustain the promotion of those activities which were launched during the Fifth Cycle;

5. Further requests the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa, in close collaboration with the Organization of African Unity and the African Development Bank, to redouble his efforts to explore ways and means of providing all the necessary technical assistance to the future African Economic Community, in particular, the drafting of its protocols and the implementation of its first work programme;

6. Invites African non-governmental organizations to adopt concrete proposals aimed at accelerating the process of economic integration and developing the awareness of all levels of African society to achieve African economic and political integration;

7. Renews its appeal to the General Assembly for the funding of additional posts in the Multinational Programming and Operational Centres, both in the Professional and General Service categories, and the provision of additional financial resources;

8. Further renews its appeal to member States to continue their support of the Centres through specific contributions to the United Nations Trust Fund for African Development and by facilitating the secondment of their civil servants to the Centres on short-term assignments;

9. Endorses the new orientation of the work programme and priorities of the Centres as proposed by their respective Committees of Intergovernmental Experts;

10. Requests the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa, in collaboration with member States, to take appropriate measures for the operationalization of the subregional development information systems, with priority being accorded to a reliable information system on the market for agricultural products, especially foodstuffs;

11. Further requests the Executive Secretary to:

(a) Establish the mandate and terms of reference of the Committees of Intergovernmental Experts for the effective implementation of the work charged to them under resolution 702 (XXV) of the Conference of Ministers of the Economic Commission for Africa;

(b) Draw up, in good time, the programme of work for the Centres for circulation to member States to allow them to prepare, in reasonble time, for the secondment of national civil servants;

Gisenyi Multinational Programming and Operational Centre

12. Requests the Gisenyi Multinational Programming and Operational Centre and the Economic Commission for Africa to assist the Great Lakes countries in implementing the provisions of the African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programmes for Socio-Economic Recovery and Transformation; 5/

13. Also requests the Gisenyi Centre, in collaboration with the secretariat of the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries, to explore the possibility of organizing, as soon as possible, through funding from the extrabudgetary resources of the Economic Commission for Africa, an expert group meeting on road transport to consider, inter alia, the following topics: road service taxation and road maintenance within the Community; an integrated road network and road map for the Community; a global approach to the opening up of the Community area; and the formulation of a Community transport master plan;

Tangiers Multinational Programming and Operational Centre

14. Requests the Economic Commission for Africa to continue its assistance to the North African countries within its support of the Arab-Maghreb Union in its integration endeavours and to continue its assistance in the establishment of the Preferential Trade Area in North Africa;

15. Further requests the Commission to establish, within the Tangiers Centre, adequate structures in order to enable the Centre to provide support to the North African Transport Commission and to ensure the proper follow-up to emigration issues;

16. Further requests the Executive Secretary of the Commission to seek appropriate funds to provide the programme on the integration of women in development in North Africa with an established post;

Niamey Multinational Programming and Operational Centre

17. Invites the member States of the Economic Community of West African States to seriously consider the establishment of a subsidy system for agricultural inputs, particularly fertilizers, pesticides, equipment and machinery, and to rationalize their distribution so as to accelerate the modernization of the agricultural sector and ensure an increase in its productivity;

5/ A/45/315, annex.

18. Requests the Niamey Multinational Programming and Operational Centre to examine the possibility of organizing, as soon as possible, with funding from the extrabudgetary resources of the Economic Commission for Africa, an expert group meeting to consider measures to be applied by the countries of the subregion in view of likely adverse effects of the European single market on their economies;

Yaounde Multinational Programming and Operational Centre

19. Invites the member States of the subregion to:

(a) Continue to accord top priority to integrated rural development;

(b) Coordinate their efforts with a view to establishing a subregional food security plan;

(c) Cooperate in the production of agricultural inputs;

(d) Promote trade in agricultural products, especially foodstuffs;

(e) Collaborate towards the gradual adoption and implementation of a common agricultural policy;

20. Requests the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa to provide the member States of the subregion with the necessary assistance in elaborating a subregional industrial development master plan and of a subregional industrialization programme;

21. Invites member States and concerned international organizations and bodies, including the Economic Commission for Africa and the United Nations Development Programme, to provide support to the national coordinating committees for the Second United Nations Transport and Communications Decade for Africa and to the Economic Community of Central African States and the Central African Economic and Customs Union to enable them to elaborate and implement a coherent subregional programme;

Lusaka Multinational Programming and Operational Centre

22. Calls upon member States of the subregion to designate focal points to facilitate data collection and to prepare country briefs;

23. Requests the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa to:

(a) Continue to assist, to the extent possible, the Southern Africa Labour Commission in the provision of secretariat services, the implementation of its expanded programme for 1991-1995, the servicing of a study tour to West Africa of women from the Labour Commission countries and serving as the ad interim secretariat of the Labour Commission;

(b) Bring the problem of unemployment in southern Africa to the attention of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity, which is responsible for monitoring events in the subregion;

(c) Assist member States, in cooperation with the Organization of African Unity, the International Labour Organisation and the United Nations Children's Fund, in the development and strengthening of human resources and social development, including institutional development and human resources policy coordination.

DRAFT RESOLUTION

The Second Industrial Development Decade in Africa (1991-2000) 6/

The Economic and Social Council,

Recalling resolution 2 (IX), adopted at the ninth meeting of the Conference of African Ministers of Industry, held from 29 May to 1 June 1989, concerning the proclamation of the Second Industrial Development Decade in Africa and the preparation of a programme for the Decade,

Recalling resolution AHG/Res.180 (XXV) of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity 7/ on the proclamation of a second industrial development decade for Africa and on an African industrialization day,

Recalling also resolution GC.3/10 on the second industrial development decade for Africa, adopted by the General Conference of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization on 23 November 1989,

Further recalling General Assembly resolution 44/237 of 22 December 1989, proclaiming the period 1991-2000 the Second Industrial Development Decade in Africa and 20 November as African Industrial Day,

Taking note of the report on the preparation of the programme for the Second United Nations Industrial Development Decade, 8/ which described the progress made in national, subregional and regional preparations as well as in meeting the schedule adopted by the ninth meeting of the Conference of African Ministers of Industry, and subsequently approved by the General Assembly at its forty-fourth session,

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6/ Resolution 709 (XXVI) of the Conference of Ministers of the Economic Commission for Africa.

7/ See A/44/603, annex III.

8/ A/44/812.

1. Mandates the Conference of African Ministers of Industry, whose tenth meeting will take place in June 1991 in Dakar, Senegal, to submit to the General Assembly, at its forty-sixth session, through the Economic and Social Council, the programme for the Second Industrial Development Decade in Africa, which is currently being finalized, together with the recommendations concerning the practical modalities of its implementation and monitoring and including modalities for the mobilization of funds needed to finance the programme at the national, subregional, regional and international levels;

2. Appeals to African countries and to African intergovernmental organizations, particularly financial institutions, to take the necessary measures to ensure the successful implementation of the programme for the Second Industrial Development Decade for Africa and to give priority to the mobilization of their own financial resources for the implementation and monitoring of the programme;

3. Also appeals to the international community, particularly bilateral and multilateral funding institutions, to significantly increase their contributions to the industrial sector in African countries so as to ensure optimum implementation of the programme for the Second Industrial Decade for Africa;

4. Recommends that the General Assembly provide the Economic Commission for Africa with adequate resources to enable it to effectively assist African countries and organizations in the implementation of the programme for the Second Industrial Decade for Africa;

5. Also recommends that the policy organs of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization significantly increase their regular budget resources allocated for the implementation of the programme for the Second Decade;

6. Further appeals to the United Nations Development Programme to allocate, under its Africa regional programme for the Fifth Programming Cycle (1992-1996), adequate resources for supporting activities of the programme of the Second Decade;

7. Requests the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa to undertake, in cooperation with the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity and the Director-General of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, follow-up actions to promote national, subregional and regional activities in support of the programme for the Second Industrial Development Decade for Africa and submit a report on the implementation of this resolution to the next meeting of the Conference of Ministers.

DRAFT RESOLUTION

Second United Nations Transport and Communications Decade in Africa 9/

The Economic and Social Council,

Recalling resolution ECA/UNTACDA/Res.88/73, adopted by the Conference of African Ministers of Transport, Communications and Planning in March 1988, at Kinshasa, Zaire, in which the appropriate United Nations bodies were requested to take the necessary measures to proclaim a second United Nations transport and communications decade in Africa,

Recalling also resolution 639 (XXIII) of the Conference of Ministers, Economic and Social Council resolution 1988/67 of 28 July 1988 and General Assembly resolution 43/179 of 20 December 1988, all proclaiming the period 1991-2000 the Second United Nations Transport and Communications Decade in Africa,

Referring to resolutions ECA/UNTACDA/Res.89/75 and ECA/UNTACDA/Res.89/82 of 12 November 1989 adopted at Tangiers, Morocco, by the Conference of African Ministers of Transport, Communications and Planning, which endorsed the goals, global and sectoral objectives, strategies and guidelines for the preparation of the programme of the Second Transport and Communications Decade and the establishment of priorities for the programme,

Further referring to resolution ECA/UNTACDA/Res.91/84 of 8 February 1991 adopted at Abuja, Nigeria, by the Conference of African Ministers of Transport, Communications and Planning, also on the Second United Nations Transport and Communications Decade in Africa,

Recognizing the fundamental role that road transport plays in regional integration within the objectives of the programme for the Second Decade and the urgent need for harmonized and coordinated development of the subsector through the proposed reactivation of the Trans-African Highway Bureau,

Bearing in mind resolutions 604 (XXII) of April 1987 and 639 (XXIII) of April 1988 of the Conference of Ministers of the Economic Commission for Africa and ECA/UNTACDA/Res.89/79 of November 1989 (Tangiers, Morocco) all of which requested the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa to urgently reactivate the Trans-African Highway Bureau and to allocate adequate resources for its efficient functioning,

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9/ Resolution 710 (XXVI) of the Conference of Ministers of the Economic Commission for Africa.

Having considered the report of the eighth meeting of the Conference of African Ministers of Transport, Communications and Planning held in Abuja, Nigeria, on 8 February 1991 and the progress report of the Secretary-General on preparatory arrangements for the Second United Nations Transport and Communications Decade in Africa, 10/

Taking note of the adoption of the Second Decade programme and the decision on the reactivation of the Bureau made by the Conference of African Ministers of Transport, Communications and Planning at Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 8 May 1991,

Appreciating the work done by the national coordinating committees, the Resource Mobilization Committee, the Inter-Agency Coordinating Committee and the subsectoral and subregional working groups in preparing the strategy and programme for the the Second Decade,

Noting with appreciation the contribution of the Economic Commission for Africa, the Organization of African Unity, the African Development Bank, the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme, the regional and subregional intergovernmental organizations and the United Nations specialized agencies to the preparation of the programme for the Second Decade,

Recognizing the important role of the national coordinating committees and the various African subregional and regional organizations in the implementation of the programme for the Second Decade,

1. Adopts the programme of the Second United Nations Transport and Communications Decade in Africa (1991-2000);

2. Recommends the programme of the Second Decade to the General Assembly for approval;

3. Requests the General Assembly to:

(a) Formally launch the Second United Nations Transport and Communications Decade in Africa, which was declared in Assembly resolution 43/179 of 20 December 1988;

(b) Provide the Economic Commission for Africa with the necessary regular budget resources to enable it to effectively and efficiently carry out the responsibilities mandated to it as the lead agency of the programme for the Second Decade;

10/ A/44/255-E/1989/62.

4. Appeals to all African Governments, as beneficiaries of the programme, to give support for the achievement of the objectives of the Second United Nations Transport and Communications Decade programme at the national, subregional and regional levels by:

(a) Ensuring the establishment and proper functioning of national coordinating committees;

(b) Participating in financing and implementing the national projects that are included in the programme;

(c) Contributing and cooperating effectively in the financing and implementation of subregional and regional Second Decade projects;

5. Requests the Economic Commission for Africa, as lead agency, to ensure that adequate manpower and financial resources, both regular and extrabudgetary, are allocated for harmonizing, coordinating and monitoring the organization and implementation of the activities of the Second Decade and other relevant projects which have been mandated to the Commission as lead agency;

6. Requests the United Nations Development Programme to continue to support the implementation of the programme at the national, subregional and regional levels and, in particular, the activities of the lead agency in monitoring, evaluating, managing and reporting on the implementation of the programme of the Second Decade;

7. Appeals to United Nations agencies and other international organizations to provide all the necessary technical and other assistance to African Governments and work closely with the Economic Commission for Africa, the Inter-Agency Coordinating Committee and African regional and subregional intergovernmental organizations in order to effectively implement the programme and projects of the Second Decade;

8. Appeals to individual international, African, regional and subregional financial institutions to ensure and facilitate the financing of national, subregional and regional Decade projects by giving adequate priority and special attention to the Second Decade programme and projects in their respective lending activities in Africa, and to commit themselves actively and collectively to mobilize adequate resources for the effective implementation of the programme and projects of the Second Decade;

9. Requests the Economic Commission for Africa to prepare draft statutes for the single bureau of the Trans-African Highway Authorities for adoption by member States;

10. Appeals to member States, associate members and non-members of the Trans-African Highway Authorities and their coordinating committees to honour their financial obligations to the bureau;

11. Further appeals to member States to review the statutes and regulations governing the Trans-African Highway Authorities in order to adapt them to the new operating structure of the trans-African highways;

12. Further appeals to donors and, in particular, to the United Nations Development Programme to assist in the financing of the extended programme of the single bureau designed to assist member States in the implementation of the programme of the Second Transport and Communications Decade in Africa;

13. Requests the Resource Mobilization Committee of the Second Transport and Communications Decade in Africa to assist the bureau in its efforts to mobilize resources for its operation;

14. Expresses its appreciation to the United Nations Development Programme for its efforts to provide assistance in order to enable African countries to properly prepare the Second Decade programme;

15. Appeals to the United Nations Development Programme to provide the African countries with the technical assistance needed to coordinate the preparation and implementation of the programme at the national, subsectoral and subregional levels;

16. Requests the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa to report at its next meeting on the progress made in the implementation of the present resolution.

5. In addition, at its seventeenth meeting, the ECA Conference of Ministers took note of the expression of interest by Namibia to host the eighteenth meeting of the Conference of Ministers in Windhoek, Namibia, in 1992, subject to further consultations by Namibian authorities and the approval of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly, in accordance with paragraph 4 (f) of General Assembly resolution 40/243.

B. Matters brought to the attention of the Council

1. Economic Commission for Europe

Resumed forty-fifth session (14 December 1990)

Decision O (45). The activities of the Economic Commission for Europe

6. The Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) decided on five priority areas of activity (environment, transport, statistics, trade facilitation, and economic analysis), and decided on practical measures in those priority areas. It also decided on broad outlines of work in sectors not identified as priorities in order to promote the process of economic reform and the integration of the economies in transition with the global economy. It agreed on criteria for the selection of transition-related activities and identified examples of issues and problems to be addressed by workshops and similar informal activities. It agreed on a certain number of adjustments to the methods of work and structures of its subsidiary bodies.

Decision P (45). Institutional arrangements for ECE

7. Stressing the importance of the political and economic reforms taking place in ECE countries, the Chairman of the Commission was requested to convene, at least every three months, ad hoc informal meetings of the Commission to consult on policy matters, assist in the preparations for the annual sessions, monitor progress in the work programmes and offer any necessary guidance to the Executive Secretary. The Commission decided that its annual sessions would be reduced to seven working days.

Forty-sixth session

Decision A (46). The work of the Commission as a whole and its future activities

8. The Commission reaffirmed its determination to implement decisions O and P (45) and requested its subsidiary bodies and the Executive Secretary to carry out without delay the provisions of those decisions. It requested its subsidiary bodies to take into account the provisions contained in the documents of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, which called for multilateral implementation within ECE and requested the Executive Secretary to report to Conference meetings, if invited, on the relevant activities of ECE. The Commission approved its programme of work for 1991-1992 and endorsed, in principle, subject to review at its forty-seventh session, its programme of work for 1991-1995.

Decision B (46). Cooperation in the field of economic analysis and assistance to countries in transition

9. The Commission stressed the importance it attached to the promotion of the process of economic reform and transition to a market economy in the

countries of Eastern and Central Europe and to increased cooperation between the existing international institutions. It reaffirmed the need for high-quality observation and analysis, and accorded high priority to analytical work on the transition process. It encouraged the Senior Economic Advisers to pursue their analysis of selected medium- and long-term issues and to study the economic consequences for ECE member countries resulting from Security Council resolution 661 (1990).

Decision C (46). International cooperation to address and mitigate the consequences of the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant

10. The Commission expressed profound concern about the ongoing effects on people's lives and health of the disaster at Chernobyl, which had serious consequences of unprecedented scale, and noted with satisfaction the work being done by certain of its subsidiary bodies in exploring possibilities for projects on problems arising from the accident. It called upon its subsidiary bodies to continue to contribute to that end in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 45/190. It also called upon its member States to continue their participation in the ECE activities seeking to alleviate the consequences of the accident.

Decision D (46). The European Red List of Globally Threatened Animals and Plants

11. Conscious of the need to conserve the common European heritage of wildlife, particularly globally threatened animal and plant species, the Commission recommended that ECE Governments implement appropriate protective measures for species included in the Red List and strengthen national programmes for surveying and monitoring flora, fauna and their habitats. It requested them also to identify, protect and provide for the effective management of habitats of threatened species, to collaborate to reintroduce them where appropriate, and consider alternative methods to enhance populations of threatened flora and fauna.

Decision E (46). Cooperation in the field of environment and sustainable development

12. Reaffirming that environmental cooperation was one of the priorities of ECE, the Commission appealed to member Governments to further strengthen this cooperation and reiterated its call to its subsidiary bodies to actively promote sustainable development as a guiding principle for all activities. It invited member countries to sign or advance work on various international instruments in the field of protection of the environment. It invited the Senior Advisers on Environmental and Water Problems to promote the integration of policies based on sustainable development into planning, decision-making and economic activities. The Executive Secretary was invited to bring to the attention of the other regional commissions the ECE activities aimed at contributing to sustainable development, in particular the results of the Bergen Conference. It urged member countries, in view of their special

responsibilities in relation to global environmental problems and in taking a lead in efforts towards solving these problems, to contribute fully to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development to be held in 1992 and to work actively towards the completion of a framework convention on climate change in time for signing at the Conference.

Decision F (46). Cooperation in the field of transport

13. The Commission welcomed the completion of a series of legal instruments (agreements and conventions) in the field of transport and underlined the need to continue the work on harmonization of regulations in all modes of inland transport. It noted the results of the work done on road safety and on dimensions of loading units, and underlined the need to promote environmentally sound modes of transport. It also underlined the need to ensure effective coordination with other international organizations in areas of mutual interest.

2. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

14. In adopting resolution 47/1 on the Seoul Declaration on Regional Cooperation, the Commission recognized that the dynamism and vitality of the Asian and Pacific region created the condition to utilize fully existing subregional organizations in the region in order to foster regional cooperation which was declared of paramount importance in this respect. The role of the Commission, as mandated by the General Assembly, as the main general economic and social development centre within the United Nations system for the Asian and Pacific region, was reaffirmed, and all members and associate members were urged to take concerted action to strengthen regional cooperation with a view to meeting effectively the economic and social development challenges in the coming decades.

15. The Commission, at its forty-seventh session, focused attention on the subject of industrial restructuring in Asia and the Pacific as the theme topic of the session, and adopted resolution 47/2 on the Seoul Plan of Action for Promoting Industrial Restructuring in Asia and the Pacific. In doing so, it recalled the Vienna Programme of Action on Science and Technology for Development, adopted by the United Nations Conference on Science and Technology for Development in 1979, and the Commission resolutions 235 (XL) of 27 April 1984 on the Tokyo Programme on Technology for Development in Asia and the Pacific, 256 (XLII) of 2 May 1986 on the ESCAP Plan of Action on National and Regional Initiatives for Human Resources Development: Its Technological Dimensions, and 274 (XLIV) of 20 April 1988 on the Jakarta Plan of Action on Human Resources Development in the ESCAP Region. The Commission requested that a meeting of senior officials of members and associate members of the Commission be organized before the end of 1991 to deliberate further on the Seoul Plan of Action with a view to examining its content, priorities and modalities for promoting industrial restructuring in the ESCAP region. The report of the meeting of senior officials will be submitted to the Meeting of Ministers of Industry and Technology scheduled for 1992, and the outcome of

the Meeting of Ministers of Industry and Technology will be reported to the forty-eighth session of the Commission.

16. The Commission endorsed, in general, the recommendations of the Group of Eminent Persons on Intergovernmental Structure Subsidiary to the Commission relating to the progressive reorganization of the work of the Commission on a thematic basis, that is, the setting up of three thematic committees, dealing with regional economic cooperation, environment and sustainable development, and poverty alleviation and economic growth. The Commission adopted resolution 47/3 on restructuring the intergovernmental structure subsidiary to the Commission, in which it recalled the observations made at its forty-sixth session that the revised committee structure, which had evolved as a result of its resolution 262 (XLIII), had not functioned sufficiently effectively, and the recommendations contained in the report of the Group of Eminent Persons on the Intergovernmental Structure Subsidiary to the Commission. It recognized that the development problems were complex, requiring interdisciplinary and intersectoral action. The Commission approved the holding of a meeting of senior officials of members and associate members in 1991 to consider and finalize the detailed recommendations of the Group. The Commission requested the Executive Secretary to submit the report of the meeting of senior officials, together with his assessment of the organizational, staffing and financial implications, to the Commission at its forty-eighth session.

17. The Commission recalled the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade, adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 45/199 of 21 December 1990, in which Member States stressed, inter alia, the need for full implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s, 11/ and the preparatory work carried out by the ESCAP secretariat, in response to Commission resolutions 271 (XLIV) of 20 April 1988 and 46/4 of 13 June 1990. The continuing deterioration in the overall economic and social conditions of the least developed countries was noted with concern. The Commission was of the view that although the primary responsibility for the formulation and effective implementation of national policies and priorities for economic growth and development lay in the efforts of the least developed countries, it stressed that successful implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s will depend on shared responsibility and strengthened partnership with United Nations organizations and donors. In particular, close coordination with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development was emphasized in the review and monitoring of the progress in economic cooperation between the least developed countries and other developing countries. Towards that goal, the Commission adopted resolution 47/4 on the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s in which it requested the organization of cluster meetings, preferably every two years, with all countries concerned, in order to improve and strengthen existing cooperation arrangements at the regional

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11/ See A/CONF.147/Misc.9, Add.1, para. 10.

and subregional levels. Furthermore, the Commission decided that extended coverage of the expressed needs and problems of the least developed, land-locked and small island countries of the region within the framework of the Programme of Action be ensured, and that they should be addressed as part of the ongoing programme of work and priorities of the secretariat in order to contribute to the follow-up process of the Programme of Action. Additionally, it decided that the collection, compilation, analysis and dissemination of information on the implementation of the Programme of Action on a yearly basis, and identification and adoption of measures for full implementation of the Programme of Action during the 1990s, should be undertaken. The Commission endorsed subprogramme 12, special programme for the least developed, land-locked and island developing countries, of the programme of work and priorities.

18. The Commission expressed concern that the growing number of landless farmers in some ESCAP countries, and the rapidly increasing rural urban migration all over the region, were intensifying, resulting in spreading poverty. It was felt that there was a need for taking direct and more effective measures to reduce poverty, including integration of the poor into the mainstream of economic activities. In its resolution 47/5, on regional support for the alleviation of poverty, the Commission called upon member countries to give the highest priority to the initiation and implementation of poverty alleviation activities, wherever appropriate, by incorporating them as integral components of their respective national development plans and programmes. The Executive Secretary was requested to formulate appropriate policies and programmes from a regional perspective for the alleviation and eventual elimination of poverty and to accelerate the exchange of ideas, experience and expertise through technical cooperation among developing countries relating to poverty alleviation policies, strategies and programmes among member countries. In particular, the Commission recommended that the objective of alleviation and eradication of poverty should be included in the consideration of issues at: (a) the Fourth Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference on Social Welfare and Social Development to be held in 1991; (b) the Fourth Asian and Pacific Population Conference to be held in 1992; and (c) the Ministerial Conference on Urbanization to be held also in 1992. A report will be submitted to the Commission at its forty-ninth session on the progress made in the implementation of the present resolution, which includes an examination of the possibility of holding a meeting at the ministerial level in 1994 on the question of poverty alleviation in the ESCAP region, with particular reference to least developed countries.

19. The Gulf conflict has had an adverse impact on the environment of the ESCAP region, despite the measures already taken by the affected countries themselves to alleviate the adverse effects of the crisis. The Commission adopted resolution 47/6 on assistance to the countries in the Asian and Pacific region affected by the Persian Gulf crisis and urged multilateral institutions to respond promptly to the needs of those developing countries by mobilizing additional assistance in cooperation with relevant international organizations and affected countries, and to correlate information on the possible impact on the ESCAP region of the environmental degradation that had

taken place. The Executive Secretary was requested to use his good offices with the Presidents of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council in order to obtain the assistance requested under that resolution.

20. In recalling the General Assembly resolution 44/228 of 22 December 1989 on the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, to be held in Brazil in 1992, the Commission attached importance to the increased joint efforts by countries in the ESCAP region towards developing policies and programmes that maintained a better balance between economic and social development. The Commission endorsed the regional strategy on environmentally sound and sustainable development and the Asian and Pacific input to the Conference, which were agreed upon by the Meeting of Senior Officials on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, held at Bangkok from 13 to 19 February 1991. The Commission also endorsed the recommendation by the Meeting of Senior Officials of the establishment of an inter-agency committee on environment and development. The major objective of the Committee is to enhance coordination and strengthen regional cooperation in formulating, implementing, reviewing, monitoring and reporting on activities and initiatives in the Asian and Pacific region for the promotion of environmentally sound and sustainable development. In adopting resolution 47/7 on integration of environment and development in Asia and the Pacific, the Commission called for the early implementation of the various recommendations of the Ministerial-level Conference, in particular the Ministerial Declaration on Environmentally Sound and Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific, and requested the Executive Secretary to keep the progress of implementation of the Ministerial Declaration and the regional strategy under review. It also requested the Executive Secretary to explore the feasibility of a regional funding mechanism for the implementation of national, regional and subregional programmes and projects for environmentally sound and sustainable development.

21. The Commission recognized the importance of sustainable natural resources development and environmental management, baseline data on existing natural resources and the environment, remote sensing and the allied geographic information systems technology which provide essential tools for environmental impact analysis. In noting that a number of members and associate members of the Commission had already become involved in those critical areas, the Commission adopted resolution 47/8 on regional cooperation and coordination in remote sensing and geographic information systems. The resolution called for continued attempts aimed at promoting and strengthening regional cooperation and collaboration in the area of satellite technology applications for sustainable natural resources and environment management. The Commission requested that remote sensing and geographic information systems applications be incorporated in the work programme as a regular programme activity, focusing on the multisectoral dimensions of space applications involving, inter alia, remote sensing and geographic information systems, natural resources management, natural disaster reduction, environmental monitoring and planning, technology, agriculture and human settlements.

22. Labour migration from the developing countries of the ESCAP region to other regions has provided many developing ESCAP countries with new employment opportunities and balance-of-payments support. The mutually beneficial relationship that has developed over the years between the labour exporting developing countries of the ESCAP region and the labour importing countries of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) region has been of direct interest to both regions. The Commission noted that the disruptions that the Gulf conflict created in terms of labour migration between the ESCAP and ESCWA regions, and the opportunities available to countries in both the ESCAP and ESCWA regions in the aftermath of that conflict, called for revitalization of the interregional labour migration process along lines more conducive to development in both regions. In adopting resolution 47/9 on international cooperation on labour migration between the ESCAP and ESCWA regions, the Commission requested the Executive Secretary, in close consultation with the Executive Secretary of ESCWA, to undertake a thorough analysis of the demographic, economic and social policy issues involved in labour migration between the ESCAP and ESCWA regions with a view to identifying means to enhancing the benefits to both the labour exporting and importing countries, specifically drawing upon earlier studies undertaken by ESCAP and the relevant international organizations in that area, and to promote a dialogue between the countries concerned in the ESCAP and ESCWA regions on policy issues, with the objectives of maximizing the mutual benefits and minimizing the costs involved in the process of international labour migration. A report will be submitted to the Commission at its forty-ninth session on the progress achieved in the implementation of that resolution.

23. The Commission noted the support provided for the programmes of the Transport and Communications Decade for Asia and the Pacific, 1985-1994. In its resolution 47/10 on the same subject, the Commission decided that, for the second quinquennium of the Decade, those programmes should be redesigned and implemented in such a way as to avoid the shortcomings identified during the first quinquennium, taking account of the anticipated developments in the transport and communications sectors in the region over the remaining period of the Decade, which had to be modified to 1992-1996 to coincide with the period of the medium-term plan, 1992-1997. The Commission supported the convening of a meeting of ministers responsible for transport and communications in 1992 and urged the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to provide funds and the United Nations organizations and specialized agencies to cooperate and coordinate their activities with the secretariat. The Executive Secretary was requested to take the lead role in the coordination, monitoring of and reporting on the Decade, as recommended in the report of the mid-term review, to encourage the active participation of existing ESCAP subregional groupings in the formulation and implementation of the relevant activities, and to promote the active involvement of commercial sectors in the implementation of the Decade as well as to undertake an evaluation of the Decade after its completion and to submit his report, with appropriate recommendations.

24. In its resolution 47/11 on interregional cooperation in the area of trade facilitation, the Commission recalled Economic and Social Council resolution 1989/118 which, inter alia, directed the regional commissions to formulate, jointly with United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, a project proposal for interregional cooperation, including the detailing of the technical and resource requirements in the area of trade facilitation and, in particular, the phased application of the rules for Electronic Data Interchange for Administration, Commerce and Transport (EDIFACT), wherever appropriate. The Commission recognized that trade facilitation measures and electronic data interchange standards should be applied uniformly by all countries and, to that end, the countries and areas of the ESCAP region needed to cooperate effectively among themselves and with the rest of the world. It requested UNDP and other multilateral and bilateral donors to provide adequate resources to ensure the full realization of the project. A report on the implementation of that resolution will be submitted to the Commission at its forty-eighth session.

25. The Commission, welcoming the adoption by the World Summit for Children of the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and the Plan of Action for its implementation in the 1990s, 12/ adopted resolution 47/12 dealing with the regional follow-up to the World Summit for Children. Bearing in mind its decision to convene the Fourth Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference on Social Welfare and Social Development at Manila in 1991 to consider the adoption of a regional social development strategy towards the year 2000 and beyond, the Commission requested the Executive Secretary to ensure that appropriate consideration be given by the Ministerial Conference, in its deliberations on a social development strategy for the ESCAP region, to the World Declaration and Plan of Action and to further ensure that, in close collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), action would be taken by all members and associate members in response to the concerns for the survival, protection and development of children as enunciated in the World Declaration and Plan of Action.

26. In its resolution 47/13 on the International Year of the Family, the Commission recalled General Assembly resolution 44/82 of 8 December 1989 in which the Assembly proclaimed 1994 the International Year of the Family, and Commission resolution 45/1 of 5 April 1989 on a regional social development strategy towards the year 2000 and beyond. It also recalled the importance of ensuring the realization within the family of the principles affirmed in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women 13/ and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. 14/ It requested the Executive Secretary to convene in 1993 a regional intergovernmental preparatory meeting

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12/ A/45/625, annex.

13/ General Assembly resolution 34/180, annex.

14/ General Assembly resolution 44/25, annex.

of members and associate members of the Commission for the observance of the Year. It also requested the Executive Secretary to initiate, in collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and other concerned agencies, a series of country studies on the role of the family in development in order to provide a basis for formulating proposals for regional action on the preparation and observance of the Year.

27. Among other important decisions taken at the forty-seventh session, the Commission endorsed the proposal to hold a ministerial meeting on urbanization in 1992 to alert the region's political leadership to the increasingly serious problem of urbanization in the region. The Commission also endorsed a recommendation to establish an Asia-Pacific urban forum which would provide a mechanism for promoting regional cooperation among all actors dealing with urban issues.

28. The Commission also welcomed the offer of Indonesia to host a regional, ministerial-level conference on women in development in Jakarta in 1993 in preparation for the World Conference on Women scheduled to be convened in 1995. It requested the secretariat to take appropriate action, in consultation with the Government of Indonesia and with other countries and areas of the ESCAP region, to ensure that the regional conference would be a success.

29. The Commission endorsed proposals to establish inter-agency committees, to be chaired by the Executive Secretary of ESCAP, in such areas as health and the integration of women in development. It also endorsed the recommendation for the establishment of a regional inter-agency committee on environment and development, under the chairmanship of the Executive Secretary of ESCAP, and urged the secretariat to take the necessary steps to put the inter-agency coordination mechanism into operation as early as possible. It may be noted that inter-agency task forces or steering committees already exist under the chairmanship of the Executive Secretary of ESCAP in the areas of water, integrated rural development, human resources development, transport and communications, and youth.

30. After a detailed examination of the work programme in its Committees of the Whole I and II, the Commission adopted the programme of work and priorities for the period 1992-1993 as proposed. Some delegations requested that the additional posts required to implement the work programme should be acquired through redeployment. Other delegations expressed the view that if redeployment of resources from within ESCAP was not feasible, the possibility of generating additional resources should then be explored. The Commission requested the Executive Secretary to convey the above decision through the Secretary-General to the General Assembly for its consideration in determining the programme budget for the period 1992-1993.

3. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

31. The sessions of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean are held biennially, thus no session was held during the period under consideration. The most important activity of the Commission during the past year was the Regional Preparatory Meeting for the United Nation Conference on Environment and Development, held in Mexico City from 4 to 7 March 1991. The Preparatory Conference took note of the adoption by the Latin American and Caribbean countries that are members of ECLAC of a declaration entitled the "Tlatelolco Platform" whose text may be found in the final report of the Meeting (ECLAC document LC/G.1656 (Conf.80/3)).

32. The Tlatelolco Platform was adopted as a contribution from Latin America and the Caribbean to the preparations for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. It expresses a concrete and coordinated position of the region with respect to the main issues of sustainable development, establishing an appropriate link between subjects related to development and those associated with the environment.

33. The principal points set out in this declaration are as follows:

(a) Latin American and Caribbean participation in the search for a solution to the global environmental problems affecting the atmosphere despite the fact that these countries bear little responsibility for the emergence of these problems;

(b) The conservation and sustainable management of its ecosystems in order to protect its biological diversity;

(c) The protection and management of land-based resources;

(d) The protection and management of oceans, seas and coastal zones;

(e) The protection of freshwater quality and supply;

(f) The eradication of poverty in human settlements;

(g) The improvement of the level and quality of life in both urban and rural settlements;

(h) The environmental management of wastes, especially of hazardous and toxic wastes

4. Economic Commission for Africa

34. The Conference of Ministers of the Economic Commission for Africa also adopted the following resolutions:

Resolution 705 (XXVI). Implementation of the Lagos Plan of Action and the Final Act of Lagos at the national, regional and subregional levels

35. The Conference of Ministers recommended that all national Governments base their short-, medium-, and long-term development plans, programmes and policies on the content of the Lagos Plan of Action and the Final Act of Lagos, as well as on additional areas of focus, namely: the African cultural dimension; science and technology; management development; human resources development, especially education; popular participation, particularly greater participation of women in development; strengthening the democratization processes; and mobilization of internal and external financial resources for the implementation of the Lagos Plan of Action and the Final Act of Lagos.

Resolution 707 (XXVI). Strengthening population information infrastructures in support of population programmes in Africa

36. The Conference of Ministers called upon the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and other donor Governments and agencies to further assist in strengthening the Population Information Network for Africa to continue its operations in developing regional, subregional and national capacities for information-sharing and for improving the flow of population information and data in the region.

Resolution 711 (XXVI). Revitalization of mining industries in Africa

37. The Conference of Ministers requested the secretariat of ECA to explore ways and means of financing, between now and the fifth Regional Conference on the Development and Utilization of Mineral Resources in Africa, planned for 1993, with the participation of the African Development Bank and the World Bank and in collaboration with competent African intergovernmental agencies, a comparative study on mining development policies in Africa in order to recommend improvements in those policies at the national level and their coordination at the regional and subregional levels.

Resolution 712 (XXVI). African participation in the preparation for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development

38. The Conference of Ministers urged the agencies of the United Nations system to support ECA in its efforts to prepare the region for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development to be held in 1992.

Resolution 713 (XXVI). The African social situation

39. The Conference of Ministers invited all African Governments, specialized agencies, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations concerned, to make all efforts in the preparation and observance of the International Year of the Family, as proclaimed by the General Assembly in resolution 44/82 of 8 December 1989, to create greater awareness, at the grass-roots, national and regional levels, of the African family as the pillar and fundamental unit of society.

Resolution 714 (XXVI). Women in development

40. The Conference of Ministers urged member States to intensify their efforts to implement the recommendations of the Abuja Declaration by channelling human and financial resources to national machineries responsible for women's concerns and monitor the attainment of the targets of the Declaration.

Resolution 715 (XXVI). Improvement of the status of women in the ECA secretariat

41. The Conference of Ministers urged the Executive Secretary to explore the possibility of: (a) increasing the number of women at decision-making levels, and (b) allocating additional staff to the African Training and Research Centre for Women of ECA and at the Multinational Programming and Operational Centre level to strengthen the programmes for women.

Resolution 716 (XXVI). Implementing an integrated approach to development information

42. The Conference of Ministers requested UNDP to consider the funding of the activities of the Pan-African Documentation and Information System under the Fifth Regional Programming Cycle for Africa commensurate with its expansion of operational activities.

Resolution 719 (XXVI). Contributions to the United Nations Trust Fund for African Development (UNTFAD)

43. The Conference of Ministers invited African member States and the international community to contribute more generously to the United Nations Trust Fund for African Development.

Resolution 720 (XXVI). UNDP Fifth Inter-Country Programme for Africa

44. The Conference of Ministers endorsed the Orientation Paper for the UNDP Fifth Inter-Country Programme for Africa (1992-1996) and, at the same time, expressed concern about the reduction in resources to Africa.

Resolution 721 (XXVI). IFAD Special Programme for Sub-Saharan African Countries Affected by Drought and Desertification

45. The Conference of Ministers emphasized the urgent need for a continuous, predictable and uninterrupted flow of resources to Africa for recovery and development, particularly for agriculture, and to meet the urgent need of combating drought and for economic reforms, and the need for continuous and enhanced cooperation between ECA and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) in the interest of African economic recovery and development with transformation.

Resolution 723 (XXVI). Vote of thanks to Mr. Mbatkam Tchouta-Moussa, Deputy Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa

46. The Conference of Ministers expressed its profound gratitude to Mr. Mbatkam Tchouta-Moussa for his invaluable contribution to the work of the Commission during his many years of service and wished him every success in the discharge of his new and high responsibilities.

Resolution 725 (XXVI). Choice of the name "Adebayo Adedeji Conference Centre" for the new conference centre of the Economic Commission for Africa

47. The Conference of Ministers, bearing in mind the impact and impression that his work has left on ECA and its member States through his relentless efforts to establish policies and strategies for Africa with the aim of the political and socio-economic integration of the continent, recommended to name the new conference centre of ECA the "Adebayo Adedeji Conference Centre".

48. The Conference of Ministers of the Economic Commission for Africa also adopted the following resolutions:

Resolution 706 (XXVI). Proposed UNFPA technical support teams

The Conference of Ministers,

Recalling Economic and Social Council resolution 671 (XXV) of 25 April 1958, by which the Economic Commission for Africa was established and was assigned, inter alia, the task of facilitating concerted action for the economic development of Africa and maintaining and strengthening economic cooperation in the region, including its social aspects, with other regions,

Recalling the provisions of General Assembly resolution 32/197 of 20 December 1977, in which the regional commissions were defined as centres for general economic and social development in their respective regions, and mandated them to exercise team leadership and responsibility for coordination at the regional level,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 33/202 of 29 January 1979, in which the regional commissions were granted executing agency status in their own right,

Noting that the existing mandates and structures at the subregional and regional levels for providing linkages across disciplines implement the intent of resolutions 32/197 and 33/202, so that any modification having an impact on the functions and structures of the regional commissions would conflict with that intention,

Recalling also resolution 311 (XIII) of the Conference of Ministers of the Commission establishing the Multinational Programming and Operational Centres with the tasks of intensifying and diversifying international economic cooperation among the countries in the region, and providing potential opportunities for sustainable economic development process in each country,

Taking note with satisfaction of the efforts made by the Commission to establish the Centres whose structures have created institutions for decentralization at the subregional level,

Mindful of General Assembly resolution 44/211 of 1989, on the comprehensive triennial review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, whose provisions have yet to be aligned with resolution 32/197 with regard to the role of regional commissions,

Noting the appreciation of member States for the services rendered by the regional advisers of the Commission on population policy and in the areas of data collection, training, research and information dissemination,

Concerned that the proposed arrangements might result in the proliferation of structures in the United Nations system,

Aware that the suggested arrangements could have a negative impact on integrated approaches to regional development,

Aware also that the United Nations, including its regional commissions, is still engaged in discussions with the United Nations Population Fund on the proposal for successor arrangements for agency support costs,

1. Appeals to the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme to consider the preeminence of the regional commissions in matters relating to regional cooperation, and resolve with the United Nations Population Fund the problems arising from the proposed arrangements;

2. Recommends that in the interest of proper coordination and effective harmonization of the various population factors at the regional level and of achieving cost effectiveness, the proposed United Nations Population Fund technical support teams correspond to the existing subregional structures of the Multinational Programming and Operational Centres of the Economic Commission for Africa and that an appropriate role be defined for the Commission in the facilitation and coordination of the team which is in accordance with its mandate under General Assembly resolution 32/197;

3. Calls upon the States members of the Commission that are members of the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme to raise with the Council the importance of the above-mentioned recommendations and to urge the Council to take up the matter with the United Nations Population Fund at the earliest opportunity.

Resolution 717 (XXVI). Programme of work and priorities of the Economic Commission for Africa for 1992-1993

The Conference of Ministers,

Having examined the past and present socio-economic development problems of Africa and the challenges it faces in the 1990s and beyond,

Bearing in mind that Africa accounts for a great number of the least developed countries of the world and that the present economic and social crisis had further weakened the region's capacity to cope with its own economic growth and development,

Realizing that there is a need for strengthening regional and subregional cooperation through joint and coordinated efforts to solving the grave economic situation facing Africa,

Having examined the proposed programme of work and priorities for the biennium 1992-1993, 15/

15/ E/ECA/CM.17/25/Rev.1.

Bearing in mind that that programme of work is the first one based on the proposed medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997, 16/

Taking note of the fact that in his submission of the proposed programme budget, the Secretary-General of the United Nations would include proposals for a programme on Africa's critical economic situation, recovery and development, as contained in the proposed medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997,

Convinced that the proposed programme of work can make significant contribution to Africa's development effort,

Noting with satisfaction the positive response of the General Assembly to the recommendations of the Review Team on the Multinational Programming and Operational Centres, which concluded, inter alia, that the structures, organization and operation of each Centre should be transformed and strengthened to make it more operational and effective in providing relevant services to member States of its subregion,

1. Endorses the work programme and priorities of the Commission for the biennium 1992-1993, as contained in document E/ECA/CM.17/25/Rev.1;

2. Urges the Secretary-General, in his submission to the Committee for Programming and Coordination, to give special consideration to the Economic Commission for Africa in providing it with adequate resources to enable it to implement fully its work programme, particularly by making available more regular budget posts, increased allocation for travel and consultancy services for the Commission's five subregional centres - the Multinational Programming and Operational Centre, the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning, and the Pan-African Documentation and Information System;

3. Also urges the Secretary-General, in his submission to the General Assembly, to stress the need to make available adequate posts and financial resources to the Economic Commission for Africa to enable it to undertake those responsibilities assigned to it under the programme on Africa's economic recovery, development and transformation;

4. Calls upon the Committee for Programming and Coordination and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions to support and favourably consider those proposals for making available adequate resources to the Economic Commission for Africa under programmes 30 and 45 at its forthcoming session.

16/ A/45/6/Rev.1.

Resolution 718 (XXVI). Revitalization of the mandate and operational framework of the Economic Commission for Africa

The Conference of Ministers,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 32/197 of 20 December 1977, on the restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system and, in particular, section IV of that resolution on structures for regional and interregional cooperation,

Recalling also General Assembly resolution 33/202 of 29 January 1979, deciding, inter alia, that the regional commissions should have the status of executing agencies, in their own right, for regional, subregional and interregional projects that are of an intersectoral character or are in areas that did not fall within the purview of specialized agencies and other United Nations bodies,

Recalling further General Assembly resolution 44/211 of 22 December 1989, on operational activities for development,

Recognizing that the aforementioned resolutions and related instruments have paved the way for and continue to sustain the process of decentralization of the United Nations system with a view to rendering its activities more relevant to the particular requirements of the developing countries as well as more efficient and cost-effective,

Conscious of the responsibilities carried out in that context by the regional commissions, which are called upon to catalyze, coordinate and develop policies and operational frameworks aimed at meeting the specific developmental requirements of their regions,

Acknowledging the indisputable central role played by the Economic Commission for Africa since its establishment in 1958 in furthering individual and collective policy objectives and translating them into integrated self-reliant strategies, such as the Lagos Plan of Action, and Final Act of Lagos, Africa's Priority Programme for Economic Recovery, the African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programmes and the Khartoum and Abuja Declarations, which have contributed to Africa's development goals for the 1990s and furthered cooperation among the African countries themselves, the African countries and the international community at large and the United Nations system in particular,

Convinced that the future development of Africa lies in the pursuit of regional and subregional socio-economic integration and ultimate establishment of the African Economic Community, and as a consequence, enhanced integrated multidisciplinary approaches to development aimed at long-term structural transformation of its economies,

Concerned that the original mandate of the regional commissions has been placed in question and that the decentralization process launched in the 1970s and the inherent focus on the regional dimensions of development have been greatly reversed,

Concerned in particular at the far-reaching consequences emerging from discussions on General Assembly resolution 44/211, which although it has stressed the need for multidisciplinary integrated approaches to development, has left open the contributions and potential of the regional commissions in that area,

Noting with appreciation the joint position taken by the regional commissions on the follow-up of resolution 44/211, essentially aimed at restoring the regional dimensions within the United Nations system coordinating bodies, such as the Consultative Committee on Substantive Questions (Operational Activities) and the Advisory Committee on Coordination, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly,

Looking forward with interest to the study on regional dimensions to be carried out under the aegis of the Director-General for Development and International Cooperation, in consultation with the regional commissions and the United Nations agencies, for inclusion in his 1991 annual report to the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 44/211, 17/

1. Commends the Executive Secretary for the initiatives he has taken to establish within existing resources a multidisciplinary advisory group to:

(a) Assist African countries to translate regionally - agreed policies into practical strategies and programmes;

(b) Provide multisectoral analyses of African needs in the priority areas, and time-bound strategies for achieving the objectives contained in those priorities;

(c) Develop, in the member States and subregional economic communities, annual programmes of multidisciplinary technical assistance;

(d) Provide multidisciplinary technical assistance teams to African countries based on those programmes;

2. Calls upon the Secretary-General to launch a comprehensive process to review and update the legislative framework of the regional commissions with a view to:

(a) Defining unambiguously and explicitly their present role and functions, and enforcing their original mandates in such a way as to correspond to regional development objectives and requirements;

17/ A/46/206-E/1991/93 and Add.1-3.

(b) Providing them with a new legislative framework which complements the resolutions of the General Assembly on operational activities for development and defines their operational and organizational objectives and requirements at the regional levels;

(c) Reviewing in relation to (a) and (b) above the funding mechanisms of the regional commissions and exploring ways and means to improve existing institutional arrangements, including the establishment of a separate global pledging arrangement for funding of regional cooperation activities;

3. Invites the Director-General for Development and International Cooperation to consider the convening of an ad hoc group meeting of high-level experts drawn from the respective regions during the second half of 1991 to discuss the revision of the mandate of the regional commissions and provide an intellectual input into the current process of restructuring and decentralizing United Nations assistance to the countries of the region;

4. Urges the agencies and bodies of the United Nations system involved in technical assistance to decentralize their staffs and establish joint units, sections and divisions with the secretariats of the regional commissions;

5. Appeals to member States to give due consideration to the regional dimension in their national development plans and ensure that its multidisciplinary implications be comprehensively addressed in those country programming exercises to be funded from national indicative planning figures.

Resolution 722 (XXVI). Vote of appreciation and thanks to Professor Adebayo Adedeji, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa

The Conference of Ministers,

Noting with deep regret the decision of Professor Adebayo Adedeji to resign his appointment as United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa,

Conscious of the exemplary leadership demonstrated by him for over 16 years at the helm of affairs of the Commission, having given a unique sense of direction to the Commission and succeeded in projecting Africa's own perceptions of its problems and needs to the world community through his outstanding capacity for lucidity and courage in actions and deeds,

Recognizing that he imparted to the work of the Commission an intellectual orientation of the highest level, enabling him to initiate coherent policies and strategies, thus giving the Commission enhanced credibility, leading not only to unreserved support from its member States but also to the respect of the entire United Nations family,

Cognizant of his numerous contributions to the cause of African development during his tenure as Executive Secretary, including, inter alia:

(a) The elaboration of major development strategies and programmes, such as the Lagos Plan of Action, Africa's Priority Programme for Economic Recovery, Africa's submission to the General Assembly on the Critical Economic Situation in Africa and the African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programmes;

(b) The promotion of regional and subregional cooperation and integration of African countries by spearheading the establishment of the Economic Community of West African States, the Economic Community of West African States, the Preferential Trade Area for Eastern and Southern African States and the Economic Community of Central African States;

(c) The launching of the Industrial Development Decade for Africa and the First and Second United Nations Transport and Communications Decades in Africa;

(d) The establishment of regional and subregional institutions sponsored by the Economic Commission for Africa active in the fields of science, technology and economic and social development;

(e) The decentralization of the activities of the Commission to the five subregions through its Multinational Programming and Operational Centres and the strengthening of the Commission's operational capacity through cooperation with the United Nations partners;

(f) The promotion of women in development through the establishment of the African Training and Research Centre for Women,

Recognizing the commitment and devotion of Professor Adedeji to Africa's major ideals and his tireless championing and defence of the continent's cause in the world,

1. Expresses to him its highest appreciation for his foresight and dynamic leadership during his tenure as Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa;

2. Expresses further to him its gratitude for his decisive role in the elaboration of what became Africa's own collective perceptions and strategies for socio-economic development and for laying the foundation for regional and subregional cooperation through the instruments which he helped to develop and the institutions and organizations he established;

3. Wholeheartedly wishes him an even more productive and rewarding future, certain that he will continue to be at the forefront of the battle for African development and progress;

4. Mandates the Chairman of the Conference of Ministers of the Commission to transmit this vote of appreciation and thanks to the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Resolution 724 (XXVI). Gulf crisis compensation fund

The Conference of Ministers,

Noting with great concern that the Gulf crisis had serious consequences for many countries, including African countries,

Noting also that the impact of the crisis was even more devastating to the already weak African economies,

Noting in particular that those African countries suffered from additional oil import bills in an amount of $US 2.7 billion arising from international increases in oil prices, uncertainties in energy supply, high domestic prices in the energy sector and related sectors, such as food and agriculture, with special reference to food security, environment, tourism, and transport,

Noting that the African countries have resorted to short-term borrowing thereby worsening their debt crisis,

Aware that a compensation fund has been set up by the Secretary-General to alleviate the adverse consequences of the Gulf crisis,

Bearing in mind that the compensation fund does not cover African countries,

1. Requests the General Assembly to extend the mandate of the compensation fund so as to make the African countries who also suffered from the consequences of the war eligible for relief and compensation from the fund;

2. Further requests that the General Assembly, as an alternative, consider the establishment of a separate compensation fund for Africa in order to alleviate the plight of the African countries whose economies have been adversely affected by the Gulf crisis;

3. Requests the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa to take immediate steps to bring the present resolution to the attention of the Secretary-General and inform the Chairman of the seventeenth Conference of Ministers of Planning and Economic Development of the response of the Secretary-General regarding the resolution;

4. Requests the Chairman of the seventeenth Conference to apprise member States of the response of the Secretary-General.

II. WORK OF THE REGIONAL COMMISSIONS

A. Economic Commission for Europe

49. In the course of the past year revolutionary events in countries of Central and Eastern Europe, including the first free elections since the Second World War, have set the stage for political, economic and social transformations. These profound changes have confronted the newly elected parliaments and newly formed Governments with the unprecedented task of managing the transition from rigid, centrally planned economies to market economies and from one-party political regimes to pluralist, democratic, political systems with increased personal freedoms. The dismantling of the "Iron Curtain" and the unification of Germany have dramatically underscored the realization that the division of the continent has at long last been overcome.

50. There is, however, no single model of a market economy that could be adopted as a blueprint for Central and Eastern European countries. Policy makers have had to make decisions that take into account the particular conditions of their country against a background of severe, short-term stabilization problems. The near-euphoria created by political change has given way to a more sober appreciation of the economic realities and grave problems facing these countries. The transition process is much more complex and protracted than originally perceived. Many issues have to be tackled simultaneously: stabilization policies to reduce imbalances, restructuring and rationalization of the economy, as well as abolition of the institutions of the old system and creation of the institutional framework of a market economy. Acceptance of any negative social consequences of these measures, especially for the vulnerable sectors of the population, will depend on the extent to which the longer-term programme for structural reform inspires public confidence.

51. The recession in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union deepened considerably in 1990. Net material product (NMP) fell by 11 per cent, on average, in Eastern Europe and by 4 per cent in the Soviet Union, as the old command system of a centrally planned economy generally collapsed faster than the new institutions and practices of a market economy could be put into place. A second major influence on Eastern output levels in 1990 was the rapid disintegration of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) system of trade and payments.

52. An important distinction must be made, however, between countries, such as Poland, Hungary and the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, where a stabilization-cum-adjustment recession is occurring within a coherent framework of policies and targets, and those where the deterioration reflects a loss of central control and the absence of rational alternatives.

53. After eight years of uninterrupted growth in Western Europe, the latter half of 1990 witnessed a sharp fall in business and consumer confidence in many countries, accentuated by the Gulf crisis. This intensified the sharp

downturn in the last quarter of the year. Growth in the Western market economies, and the world economy as a whole, is expected to weaken further in 1991. In Western Europe, average gross domestic product (GDP) growth is likely to fall below 2 per cent for the first time since 1983.

54. The past year has also witnessed remarkable progress in the process of integration in the ECE region. As the realization of the single market of the European Community nears its final phase, negotiations are under way among the member countries of the European Community on the creation of economic and monetary union as well as a political union. At the same time negotiations between the European Community and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries on the creation of a European Economic Area are proceeding. The Free Trade Agreement between the United States and Canada has also entered into force. Both the European Community and EFTA have initiated negotiations with individual countries of Central and Eastern Europe on association or free trade agreements.

55. The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) process has gained momentum during the past year in response to the new situation in the region. While the Bonn Document of April 1990 laid the groundwork for a new concept of cooperation in the region, the Paris Charter for a New Europe adopted at the CSCE Summit Meeting in November 1990 is the expression of the political will of the participating States to develop their relations in a new spirit of common principles and interests based upon economic liberty, social justice and environmental responsibility as indispensable conditions for prosperity. ECE, as an agency for the multilateral implementation of the relevant provisions of CSCE, made substantive contributions to the Bonn Conference on Economic Cooperation and the Palma de Mallorca Meeting on the Mediterranean. Its role as an instrument for economic cooperation in the region has been recognized by the Paris Charter for New Europe.

56. Subregional cooperation as an effective instrument to integrate Central and Eastern European countries with the Western part of the continent has flourished since 1990. In this context, consultations have been strengthened between the countries of the Mediterranean region, the Arctic region, the Balkan countries, the Pentagonale in Central Europe and the riparian countries of the Baltic Sea, the Black Sea and the Danube.

57. At its resumed forty-fifth session in December 1990 and its forty-sixth annual session in April 1991, the Commission decided upon a new orientation for its work to reflect the changing interests and priorities of member countries. In addition to the definition of environment, transport, trade facilitation, statistics and economic analysis as priority areas of activity, great importance has now been assigned to activities to promote assistance to countries in transition to market economies and their integration into the European and world economies. With this end in view, emphasis has been placed on practical measures and the use of informal methods of work, particularly workshops. In addition, sustainable development has been confirmed as a guiding principle for all relevant activities of ECE.

58. In the area of environmental protection, the Senior Advisers to ECE Governments on Environmental and Water Problems, meeting at ministerial level in February 1991, adopted a Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment. Rapid progress has also been made on the Convention on the Use and Protection of International Waters and Lakes and the Convention on Industrial Accidents with Transboundary Impact. Both are expected to be finalized before the end of this year. A protocol to the Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution concerning the control of nitrogen emissions entered into force in February 1991. The adoption of a further protocol on volatile organic compounds is expected in the course of the year.

59. In the field of transport the Commission has given careful consideration to the implications of the recent political and economic developments in Europe and the growing concern over the environmental impact of transport. A European-wide Road Safety Week proclaimed by ECE and staged from 1 to 7 October 1990, together with national campaigns organized in most member countries, brought a strong response from Governments and the public at large. ECE has continued to revise its conventions on road traffic signs and signals.

60. In the area of combined transport, the European Agreement on Important Combined Transport Lines and Related Infrastructure has been opened for signature. In further developing conventions and agreements governing international transport, particular attention is being given to updating regulations and provisions for the transport of dangerous goods.

61. Progress was also made in 1990 towards the development of a coherent road transport system in Europe through the revision of a number of regional conventions, including the European Agreement concerning the Work of Crews engaged in Road Transport and the 1968 Conventions on Road Traffic.

62. In the area of statistics, the Conference of European Statisticians, in responding actively to the changing needs of member countries, has made special efforts to support the national statistical offices of countries in transition. The Conference will further develop its central role in coordination and cooperation among international and supranational organizations through joint activities in the development of statistical methodology, harmonized questionnaires and shared data collection.

63. Further work to develop the Electronic Data Interchange for Administration, Commerce and Transport (UN/EDIFACT) has continued during the past year. The ECE Working Party on Facilitation of International Trade Procedures adopted a number of new messages which will be submitted to trial and testing in the coming months to increase the practical application of UN/EDIFACT as a standard for world trade. In 1990 the team of regional rapporteurs was extended to include Australia/New Zealand and Japan/Singapore. The Working Party has also adopted a programme of action relating to legal issues which still hamper international trade procedures and the introduction of electronic data interchange. Further consideration was also given to the draft proposal for interregional cooperation in the area of

trade facilitation and EDIFACT, prepared by the five regional commissions and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 1989/118.

64. In the past year the ECE Committee on the Development of Trade has given special attention to conditions favouring foreign direct investment in the ECE region, the impact of East-West compensation trade on small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and disparities of foreign trade statistics. A Guide to International Buy-back Contracts was published in 1991, and work has begun on a new guide to legal aspects of privatization.

65. Cooperation in the field of energy in 1990 has focused on issues of energy transition and energy efficiency, as well as on sustainability and environmental protection. As a follow-up to the Bergen Conference on Action for a Common Future, member States accorded great importance to the Project "Energy Efficiency 2000" designed to reduce the gap between the energy-intensive industries of Eastern Europe and the energy-saving technologies of the West. Work has also continued, in cooperation with the European Chemical Federation, on the preparation of a high-level meeting on cooperation and sustainable development in the chemical industry, as recommended by the Bergen Conference.

66. At its forty-sixth session, the Commission, in response to General Assembly resolution 45/190 and Council resolution 1990/50 on international cooperation to address and mitigate the consequences of the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, noted the activities initiated by a number of its subsidiary bodies and requested them and others to continue or to develop activities in that direction. The Commission also took up the question of special assistance requested by ECE member Governments who have been adversely affected by sanctions introduced by the Security Council in the context of the situation in Iraq and Kuwait.

67. During the past year, ECE has continued to serve as both a European institution and a body of the United Nations. As such it has provided a bridge between the United Nations and other economic institutions active in the region such as the European Community, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Council of Europe and the newly established European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). Member countries have attached high priority to the close cooperation and coordination of activities between ECE and these other economic institutions to avoid duplication of work and maximize the use of resources.

B. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

68. Keeping in view the theme topic of the forty-seventh session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), a major undertaking during the period under review was the preparation of the theme study on industrial restructuring in Asia and the Pacific, in particular with a view to strengthening regional cooperation. The study provides an

assessment of the current industrial restructuring process in Asian and Pacific economies and an evaluation of the critical economic parameters, compelling impulses, future trends and the directions of possible structural change in manufacturing and trade in the continuing efforts to sustain the growth momentum. Work has focused on identifying measures for the promotion of regional cooperation particularly, with regard to industrial development policies and strategies, trade in manufacturing, industrial investment promotion, technological development and transfer and environmental considerations in the industrial development process. At its forty-seventh session, the Commission considered and adopted a plan of action for promoting industrial restructuring in the ESCAP region aimed at accelerating the process of industrial development and overall economic growth and development.

69. Among its important tasks, the Commission continued to monitor the socio-economic situations and issues at the national, regional and international levels that might have impact on development prospects. Special attention was given to the role of both economic and social infrastructure development in accelerating growth and fulfilling basic needs in the annual Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific, Part II. With regard to international-level events of concern to the region, attention was given to the impact of the Gulf crisis. Analytical reports were prepared on the long-, medium- and short-term impact of recessionary and protectionist trends, the oil-dependency situation and the oil price increase on the overall growth of the region as well as the region's energy prospects. Attention was also accorded to evaluating the status of the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations on the ESCAP developing economies in relation to such issues as market access, rule-making and agriculture.

70. The secretariat participated actively in the preparations and conduct of the Second United Nations Conference for the Least Developed Countries held at Paris in September 1990. A regional report on the performance of least developed countries in the ESCAP region was provided to the Conference as an input to the Conference deliberations and in the formulation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s adopted at the Conference. The forthcoming Commission session will consider and recommend measures for the follow-up and review of the Programme in the light of the programme of work and priorities of ESCAP. An analysis has been made of the overall macroeconomic performance of the least developed countries, covering such elements as output growth, balance of payments, monetary and fiscal policy, budgetary performance, and is included in the Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific, 1990.

71. Activities were vigorously implemented for the promotion of environmentally sound and sustainable development in the ESCAP region. A ministerial-level Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific convened at Bangkok in October 1990 reviewed the report State of the Environment 1990 and endorsed the framework for a regional strategy on environmentally sound and sustainable development. The Conference adopted the Ministerial Declaration on Environmentally Sound and Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific. Recognizing the important role of the

non-governmental organizations and the media in environmental protection and conservation, a Non-governmental Organization/Media Symposium was organized concurrently during the ministerial-level Conference. As requested by the Conference, a meeting of Senior Officials was convened in February 1991 to finalize the regional strategy as well as the regional input to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development for consideration and endorsement by the Commission at its forty-seventh session.

72. In line with Commission resolution 46/2 on urbanization strategies in the ESCAP region towards environmentally sound and sustainable development and management of urban areas, the secretariat actively supported efforts to deal with rapid urbanization in the region by promoting a two-pronged approach: adopting micro-level policies for tackling urgent problems, such as urban environment, shelter, infrastructure and provision of services; and developing macro-level policies for more effective urban management and for building national, local and grass-roots capacities for better planning and management of urban areas. Attention was also given to strengthening regional cooperation through the participation of non-governmental organizations involved in shelter development and housing finance and close collaboration in the activities of the Regional Network of Local Authorities for the Management of Human Settlements (CITYNET).

73. With respect to the implementation of the Jakarta Plan of Action on Human Resources Development, assistance was rendered to countries in the region towards the adoption of an integrated approach to human resources development policy planning and programming, emphasizing the complementary intersectoral linkages of the various components in the overall human resources development services delivery system. A comprehensive project was launched to strengthen human resources development planning and coordination through studies and pilot projects in collaboration with other United Nations bodies and specialized agencies. Regional cooperation will be facilitated in the establishment of an ESCAP network of national focal points for human resources development, publication of guidelines on vocational training for advanced technology and a survey on the quality of life, among other areas. At the forty-seventh session of the Commission an award was presented to the first winner of the Human Resources Development Award 1990 to promote innovative and significant human resources development efforts in the region.

74. National and regional seminars and studies were implemented relating to trade expansion and trade facilitation. Assistance was provided to engender a sharpened perception of the implications of the Uruguay Round of multilateral negotiations and to establish an ESCAP trade facilitation network which could serve as a focal point for trade facilitation in the region. In pursuance of Economic and Social Council resolutions 1989/118 and 1990/74, promoting interregional cooperation for facilitation of international trade, the secretariat participated in formulating an interregional project which was endorsed for implementation by the Commission at its forty-sixth session. The Committee on Trade, at its twenty-seventh session held in February 1991, prepared a draft resolution on interregional cooperation in the area of trade facilitation for adoption by the Commission and endorsement by the Economic and Social Council at its next session.

75. The secretariat has launched a series of activities in the context of its multidisciplinary approach in support of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction. An inter-divisional task force for the Decade was formed, and the cooperation and support of other United Nations bodies and specialized agencies as well as other intergovernmental organizations have been solicited in the implementation of objectives of the Decade in the region. Regional cooperation activities in natural disaster reduction included the organization of a regional symposium on the Decade; research, training and advisory missions on measures for the reduction of water-related disasters; assessment of preparedness programmes; forecasting/warning systems; mitigation of geological hazards; and the utilization of remote sensing and geographic information systems.

76. With regard to social development issues, activities focused on the preparations for the Fourth Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference on Social Welfare and Social Development, to be held at Manila in October 1991, which will consider and adopt a regional social development strategy towards the year 2000 and beyond. Work progressed in activities for the integration of women in development, emphasizing the integration of women's concerns in development planning and the legal status of women. In the context of the growing concern about the prevalence of drug abuse, a regional meeting of Senior Officials on drug abuse issues was organized to promote regional collaboration in drug abuse control. In the implementation of Commission resolution 46/5 on the regional follow-up to the World Conference for Education For All, held in Thailand in March 1990, at a Senior Officials' meeting, the Guidelines for Action in Support for Education for All were formulated.

77. Another important undertaking was the mid-term review of the Transport and Communications Decade in Asia and the Pacific (1985-1994). To intensify the impact of the Decade and its objectives, the session of the Committee on Shipping, Transport and Communications, held in December 1990, recommended that the time-frame of the second half of the Decade should be adjusted to cover the years 1992-1996 and a new regional action programme be formulated in collaboration with other United Nations organizations and specialized agencies and the relevant intergovernmental organizations. Seminars, studies and advisory services were undertaken in various areas, including urban transport planning, a regional maritime strategy, maritime and port related legislation, regional cooperation in railways and inland water transport and freight operations. A joint plan of action in telecommunications for the period 1992-1996 aimed at the development of the telecommunications sector in the region was developed in cooperation with the International Telecommunication Union and Asia-Pacific Telecommunity and considered by the Commission at its forty-seventh session.

78. In continuing endeavours to attain the optimal effectiveness of the Commission in meeting changing regional development challenges, the secretariat undertook an in-depth study of the intergovernmental structure subsidiary to the Commission through a Group of Eminent Persons, which was convened to advise and assist the secretariat in the conduct of the study in

accordance with the decision of the forty-sixth session of the Commission. In its review of the role of the intergovernmental structure subsidiary to the Commission and recommendations for a more effective structuring, the Group of Eminent Persons focused on the multidisciplinary expertise within the secretariat and its comparative advantage in applying the intersectoral thematic approach to tackling development challenges in the region. The report of the Group presents proposals for the conceptual, functional and structural framework for organizing the subsidiary structure of the Commission, and also takes into account the findings in the report on the proposed ESCAP council for regional cooperation. The forthcoming Commission session will consider the proposals for changes to intergovernmental structure to determine the future course of action to be taken to strengthen the functions and importance of the Commission.

C. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

79. In keeping with its biennial calendar of activities, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) held its twenty-third session in Caracas, Venezuela, from 3 to 11 May 1990. Two key documents were presented to that session: "Changing production patterns with social equity" and "Latin America and the Caribbean: options to reduce the debt burden".

80. As part of its ongoing activities, ECLAC continued to publish the Economic Panorama of Latin America, the Preliminary Overview of the Latin American Economy for 1990, which was widely distributed throughout the region, and the Economic Survey of Latin America and the Caribbean, a publication which has been brought out on an increasingly timely basis from year to year.

81. In the field of agriculture, special attention was devoted to the preparation of studies on agro-industrial chains. These publications were discussed at seminars held in September and November 1990 in Santiago, Quito, Lima, and Guatemala City. Also, a seminar on dairy production/exports was organized jointly with the ECLAC office in Montevideo.

82. The activities of the Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES) were focused on providing training to high-level government officials and advice to the member Governments in economic planning, as well as in the formulation of public sector, social and regional policies. This year, as part of its ongoing training activities, a special certificate in industrial and technological strategies and policies was offered in collaboration with the Joint ECLAC/United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) Industry and Technology Division.

83. The activities of the environment programme were intended to strengthen the environmental dimension in Latin America and the Caribbean. Several technical meetings were held during 1990 to discuss matters related to that subject. Technical assistance was provided to member countries in the area of strategies and policies for bringing about environmentally sustainable development. Work was done for the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Preparatory Meeting held in March 1991.

84. In the field of human settlements, ECLAC has supported the efforts of countries to achieve substantial improvement in the conditions of housing and human settlements in the region, particularly in low-income sectors. Also, ECLAC has strengthened its research activities on the role of non-governmental and community organizations in managing the habitat.

85. In the area of industrial development, activities have been directed towards the study of measures aimed at reactivating the manufacturing sector and reappraising industrial strategies and policies in response to the new conditions prevailing in the international economic system and in the economies of the countries of the region.

86. As regards the international trade programme, reports were prepared identifying the strategic interests pursued by the Latin American countries with respect to the subjects dealt with in the Uruguay Round of negotiations. Also, documents on integration and regional cooperation, international economic negotiations, trade in commodities, manufactures and services were published. Several meetings and seminars were organized during 1990 to analyse these matters.

87. The ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean continued orienting its activities towards the promotion of cooperation among the Caribbean countries and, in particular, the exchange of experiences in a number of fields of mutual interest.

88. The Natural Resources and Energy Division has continued contributing to the elimination or mitigation of the difficulties encountered in the prospecting, extraction, transformation, conservation and marketing of the natural resources of the region. As regards mineral resources, activities have been focused on the analysis of the possibilities of expanding the region's own market for these products. Work was done on management of the water resource systems which have already been constructed and on achieving the integral development of river basins by promoting horizontal cooperation among the bodies responsible for these activities.

89. In the area of maritime resources, support continued to be provided to the countries of the region on the formulation of a marine policy consistent with their national development priorities.

90. The work of the Latin American Demographic Centre (CELADE) has been concentrated on making national sectoral agencies capable of creating and employing population inputs in the light of the basic needs of the lower income groups, the spatial distribution of the population and migration and its impact on the development process. Emphasis on key groups such as women and the aged, has been strengthened. Assistance has also been provided to the 1990 census operation and to the organization of population information in systematic form to facilitate low-cost and rapid retrieval by a wide variety of users.

91. In the field of science and technology, activities were addressed to provide Governments and other agencies of the region with information, background material and recommendations for the strengthening of their technological development capabilities.

92. The social development programme has been focused on analysing the roles and functions of the State and of the various social actors in the region, and the designing of articulated social policies in accordance with the characteristics of each situation. In the area of integration of women into Latin American and Caribbean development, substantive support has been provided to the permanent bodies charged with assessing this situation, for example, the Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean and its Presiding Officers. Two meetings were held during 1990, one in May and the other in November. Studies and reports concerning the status of Latin American women - particularly women in the low-income urban sector, peasant women and young women - with a view to the formulation of social policies aimed at improving their situation and promoting their participation, have been prepared.

93. The activities of the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters in Mexico focused on the issues of poverty and the social deterioration brought about by the economic crisis in the region.

94. The ECLAC statistics programme continued improving and expanding the regional base of quantitative, homogeneous and comparable data and the consolidation of national statistical systems and the full participation of the region in international statistical activity through the design and dissemination of methodologies, the transfer of technological innovations in data processing, the implementation in the region of the recommendations of the United Nations Statistical Commission, and the promotion of regional and international cooperation. Especially noteworthy was the institutionalization of the meeting of the Directors of Statistics of the Americas, which will be of great assistance in this connection.

95. In the field of transport, assistance was provided to the countries of the region in the provision of infrastructure and services that are adequate in both quantity and quality to support internal and international trade and passenger movements which are vital to the process of national economic and social development. A seminar on telecommunications and its impact on the economic and social development of Latin America and the Caribbean was held in Santiago, Chile, from 22 to 25 May 1990.

96. The work of the Commission has also been pursued in Mexico City, Washington, D.C., Brasilia, Port-of-Spain, Montevideo and Buenos Aires. These offices provide the secretariat with a picture of what is going on in various countries and, at the same time, help ECLAC to communicate its message more effectively than could be done from its headquarters.

D. Economic Commission for Africa

97. The following activities of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) were carried out during the period 20 May 1990 to 13 May 1991.

98. In the field of agricultural development policy planning and programming, ECA produced guidelines on the reinforcement of policy measures as a basis for the mobilization and efficient utilization of domestic resources in the implementation of agricultural investment programmes and projects.

99. A crucial area in which ECA was active during the period pertained to the implementation at all levels of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development (1986-1990). Two missions visited six selected countries in the Gisenyi and Yaoundé-based Multinational Programming and Operational Centres (MULPOCs) subregions and evaluated efforts made to implement the programme at the subregional, regional, national and international levels.

100. In its continued attempt to encourage member States to arrest the deterioration of their ecological base, the ECA secretariat carried out an evaluation of existing practices of conservation, management and exploitation of natural forests in the Lusaka-based MULPOC countries.

101. In the area of industrial policy development, planning and institution building, the main thrust of the ECA activities was geared towards the enrichment of policy formulation and planning capabilities and the development and promotion of institutional infrastructures. To that end, five technical publications were produced, three "Focus on African Industry" bulletins, one publication on the assessment of the performance of multinational industrial enterprises and one on the ways and means of developing appropriate industrial technology and human resources through cooperative activities between universities, industrial research and development institutions and enterprises.

102. Moreover, in pursuance of resolutions 2 (ix) of the ninth meeting of the Conference of African Ministers of Industry and 44/237 of the General Assembly, proclaiming the Second Industrial Development Decade for Africa, the secretariat prepared, in cooperation with the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and UNIDO, a framework and guidelines for action at the national and subregional levels with a view to assisting member States and subregional intergovernmental organizations in the preparation of their national and subregional programmes to be integrated in an overall regional programme for the Second Industrial Development Decade for Africa.

103. In the area of surveys, research and economic analysis, ECA prepared surveys on the economic and social conditions in Africa for the period 1988-1989 and 1989-1990. The surveys analyse the economic situation of the African countries, in particular, development policies and, in general, forecast for the region as a whole and its main subregions. This work involved mounting field missions to 25 African countries in order to collect information and data on the economic situation of the countries concerned and

discuss with government officials the main problems facing the countries and the policies pursued. Work was also completed on the 1991 Economic Report on Africa.

104. In the area of development planning, methods, modelling and projections, the activities that were undertaken during the period under review relate to four specific areas, namely, modelling and forecasting, research on topical planning issues of particular interest to Africa, the convening of group meetings and seminars, and operational activities.

105. In the field of economic modelling and forecasting, ECA developed a preliminary specification of a standard short-term forecasting system. ECA also has undertaken a study on planning practices in Africa. The study examines the approaches, typologies and the scope of planning mechanisms and techniques, and the implementation modalities of African development plans.

106. In the field of general and multimodal transport, a technical publication on guidelines for effective planning, management and operation of container terminals was prepared and submitted to maritime transport agencies that deal with planning and management of container transport and container terminals. Also during the period under review, ECA undertook activities geared to strengthening African capability in formulating policies and action programmes, increasing cooperation among African airlines, on one hand, and among civil aviation authorities, on the other.

107. As concerns the programme on integration of women in development, the secretariat focused its efforts on enhancing women's skills and capabilities to ensure their full contribution to the development process. This was done through advisory services to four countries, namely Angola, Kenya, Namibia and Zimbabwe, on the best way of including women's concerns in national development plans. In addition, great efforts were made to increase women's skills and opportunities.

108. As in previous years, the Pan-African Development Information System (PADIS), which was established to assist member States in developing information support for development planning, mounted a series of activities which included training, advisory services and other forms of technical cooperation for ECA member States on information management and development. It undertook database development and network building, provided user services, undertook studies and issued publications, all of which was aimed at information development in the region.

109. Another important area in which the ECA secretariat focused its attention was statistics in African programme activities. In this area the secretariat continued to address the statistical needs of the African region, in particular, and to improve demographic, social and economic data collection, processing and analysis. Emphasis was placed on technical assistance to strengthen national statistical infrastructures in the areas of computer applications and data processing, in continuation of the programme's efforts to reduce the lack of efficient, adequate and durable statistical systems in

many African countries. An essential element of the programme was training to help build up national statistical capability and self-reliance.

110. During the period under review ECA undertook a number of activities dealing with trade development and finance issues. One of these activities concerned the convening of the Special Session of the Conference of African Ministers of Trade from 14 to 17 December 1990 that culminated in the adoption of strategies for revitalization, recovery and growth of Africa's trade in the 1990s and beyond. In adopting the strategies, the special session recommended specific mechanisms on how they could be implemented, monitored and followed up at the national, subregional and international levels.

111. In respect of monetary and financial issues, the secretariat convened the second meeting of the Enlarged Committee of Libreville on the establishment of an African Monetary Fund (AMF), from 29 to 30 November 1990, which examined all outstanding issues pertaining to the establishment of the proposed African Monetary Fund.

112. In its efforts to promote domestic and intra-African trade, the secretariat convened a subregional workshop on the promotion of domestic trade as a means of accelerating the economic development of African countries.

113. With regard to public administration, management, development of budgetary and taxation systems, manpower and employment planning and policies, technical publications and reports were prepared on measures for the development of critical skills for the formulation and implementation of economic development strategies and programmes in Africa, successful cases among public enterprises in Africa, recent trends in selected African countries concerning restructuring public expenditure for economic recovery and transformation, assessment of the impact of government budgetary policies in selected African countries and trends and issues in African education.

114. Apart from these publications, the secretariat, in collaboration with government institutions in member States, organized national training courses with the aim of upgrading and strengthening the professional knowledge and practical skills of personnel, required for the performance of critical administrative and managerial functions in the public sector.

115. In the area of science and technology, the secretariat continued to focus on three main areas, namely strengthening of policies and institutions for science and technology, development of manpower for science and technology and promotion of regional and interregional cooperation in scientific and technological activities.

116. Assistance was provided on request to the Uganda Institution of Professional Engineers through participation in the Conference on Application and Innovation of Technology in Africa held in Kampala, Uganda, from 21 to 27 September 1990. Technical support was provided to the following regional institutions: the African Regional Centre for Technology (ARCT) and the African Regional Organization for Standardization (ARSO).

117. In the field of water development, ECA mounted information collection missions to six north African countries on proposals for national use and conservation of water resources.

118. ECA assistance to its member States in the field of population continued to be rendered through regional advisory services in population. Such assistance included evaluation and analysis of census and survey data, preparation of tabulation, evaluation and analysis plans. The countries which received such assistance during the period under review were: Central African Republic, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Mali, Swaziland, United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia.

119. During the period under review ECA pursued its assistance to subregional economic groupings with a view to enabling them to become effective instruments for economic integration in Africa. Such assistance was provided through the implementation of UNDP-funded multisectoral projects to the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Central African Economic and Customs Union (UDEAC).

120. The secretariat organized the fifth Joint ECA/UNDP/African intergovernmental organizations/United Nations specialized agencies Meeting from 25 to 26 April 1991 which considered, inter alia, the preparations for the Fifth Programming Cycle of UNDP as regards the Regional Programme for Africa. A report was also submitted to the meeting on the negotiation process for the establishment of the African Economic Community.

E. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

121. Since August 1990 the region has witnessed a major set-back resulting from the Gulf crisis. Consequently, the favourable economic and social outlook which prevailed in the ESCWA region in the beginning of 1990 has been seriously disrupted. Moreover, cooperation and coordination among ESCWA member countries have been relatively disturbed.

122. In the light of these negative developments, the sixteenth session of the Commission, which was to be held at Baghdad in April 1991 was postponed for next year. 18/

123. The ESCWA countries have been seriously affected by the Gulf crisis, Iraq and Kuwait in particular, as well as Egypt, Jordan and Yemen. In these countries, the huge number of returnees from the Gulf countries and Iraq has sharply aggravated the unemployment rate and added a further burden to their already stressed economies. It is therefore expected that the outlook for 1991 would be for considerably slower growth than in 1990 due to several

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18/ Economic and Social Council decision 1991/207.

trends resulting from the Gulf crisis which would negatively affect the growth prospects and the economies of the ESCWA countries.

124. During the period under review, which was beset by uncertainty and difficult conditions in the region, efforts were made by the Executive Secretary to assess short- and medium-term requirements for the continued functioning of ESCWA. High-level consultations with the United Nations Secretariat and ESCWA member countries took place for the temporary regrouping of ESCWA and the activation of its work, which was seriously hampered as a result of the extended repatriation of its staff.

125. While many activities included in the 1990-1991 work programme have already been initiated or are in the implementation phase, few outputs are expected to be reformulated or terminated. The early regrouping of ESCWA staff will make it possible to review the programme status, and activities will resume according to identified priorities.

126. Notwithstanding the turbulent situation in the region, ESCWA was able to carry out a number of activities when conditions permitted. In that regard, ESCWA participated in the UNDP mid-term review for the Fourth Cycle of the regional programme for Arab States, held at Damascus on 14 to 16 October 1990. Active participation in the regional programmes review and discussions took place, particularly with regard to activities which fall under the cooperative efforts between ESCWA, UNDP and other United Nations entities. While in Damascus, the Executive Secretary held talks with the Ministers of Economy and Planning on joint activities and technical assistance.

127. In the context of continuing efforts to enhance cooperation with other United Nations organizations, the Executive Secretary visited Washington, D.C., in April 1991, where he had extensive consultations with senior officials of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund on ways and means to maintain and strengthen cooperation for the benefit of ESCWA member States. Another visit took place in May 1991 to the United Arab Emirates, at the invitation of its authorities, with the objective of discussing and formulating technical cooperation activities in light of development priorities of the Emirates and the ESCWA work programme.

128. A high professional vacancy rate in the substantive programmes of ESCWA within the period of the present report is understandable. One reason is that contacts with authorities in the various countries of the region were difficult under the prevailing conditions. A more important factor is the status of the professional staff, who have been totally separated from their ongoing research, literature and facilities at ESCWA headquarters. Nevertheless, these difficult conditions did not hinder the implementation of many scheduled activities or generate new ones. Major studies on the impact of the Gulf crisis on the economies of Jordan, Gulf Cooperation Council countries, the Syrian Arab Republic, occupied Palestinian territories and Lebanon were completed with the contribution of all ESCWA divisions.

129. The monitoring of the impact of the Gulf crisis has been stressed in the activities of the Development and Planning Programme. A summary of economic and social development in Western Asia has been finalized. Several other studies have also been prepared which dealt with such issues as developments in the oil markets during the Gulf crisis, the financial and economic effects of the crisis in the region, developments and issues in external trade and the payments situation of countries of Western Asia.

130. ESCWA carried out a number of activities in its ongoing efforts to enhance regional cooperation and technical assistance. Technical assistance to existing industries in the countries of the region is an ongoing activity provided in the form of studies on engineering infrastructure and individual industries. In this regard, ESCWA will participate in the Gulf Cooperation Council workshop on small- and medium-sized industries, to be held at Riyadh on 10 June 1991. Other advisory services and technical assistance on major issues and problems facing ESCWA countries and other regional institutions were also provided in the field of science and technology, energy, human resources development, transport, data processing, statistics, human settlements and environment.

131. In view of the importance and benefit of the household survey to all ESCWA countries, the Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Programmes has recently agreed to participate in the financing of the project.

132. Under the food and agricultural programme, a comprehensive work programme for the Regional Centre for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development in the Near East was completed. Two studies, one related to rural development in the occupied Palestinian territories and the other on the major problems of marketing agricultural products in Jordan, were carried out. In addition, two training workshops were organized jointly with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Institute for National Planning in Egypt, in November/December 1990 and April 1991, which dealt with topics related to agricultural planning and rural development.

133. The joint ESCWA/UNIDO Division has produced several publications and has participated in a number of conferences, including the inter-agency meeting on the special programme for industrial development in the Arab region, which was held in Vienna from 20 to 23 November 1990. It aimed at coordinating UNIDO activities and programmes with the ESCWA work programme. Promoting entrepreneurship was the subject of a pilot workshop held at Amman in May 1990. The pilot programme will be repeated in Egypt, Yemen and Syria. A study on strengthening the functioning of industrial training institutions in the ESCWA region was also completed.

134. The social development programme has continued its activities in the field of drug abuse control, crime prevention and the treatment of offenders, social security, ageing and disability issues. Four studies have been prepared and are expected to be published and distributed shortly. Other outputs have been initiated on the implementation of the world programme of action concerning disabled persons (1982-1992).

135. With regard to the subprogramme on women and development, 13 projects have been initiated that aim at promoting the contribution of women to the development of the region. ESCWA participated in the Pan-Arab conference on socio-economic challenges for the 1990s, and as an executing agency for Arab association for women and development, ESCWA signed a project agreement as well.

136. Cooperation with UNFPA is continuing with regard to the activities undertaken on population. Such activities include preparation of estimations related to fertility, mortality, computer programming, labour force, household, school enrolment and urbanization.

137. As a follow-up to the Mar del Plata Action Plan, the Energy and Natural Resources Division has completed a report on the progress achieved in the implementation of the Plan in the ESCWA region, especially as it pertains to institutional and water legislation and water resources management. A study is being conducted to establish a natural resources database (water and minerals) for the ESCWA region. Other activities pertaining to the establishment of a Regional Water Resources Council and manpower training network, as well as to implementing the ESCWA/United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)/Islamic Development Bank joint projects regarding the assessment of water resources using remote sensing are also being conducted.

138. With regard to the monitoring of energy-related activities and development in the ESCWA region, the 1990 bulletin of current energy data has been completed. The 1991 bulletin is under preparation. A regional programme for renewable sources of energy and two case studies on energy demands in the household sectors have been drafted. Preparations are under way to convene a training workshop on biogas technology for nationals from ESCWA countries, to be held at Damascas during the summer of 1991. A paper on development and marketing prospects for natural gas and liquid petroleum gas in the ESCWA countries has been prepared for submission to the Interregional Symposium on Gas Development and Market Prospects by the Year 2000 and Beyond, which will be jointly sponsored by ESCWA, ECE, ECA and UNDP.

139. Under the environment programme, preparations are under way for the convening of the Arab Regional Conference on Environment and Development, jointly organized with UNDP and the Council of Arab Ministers on Environment, to be held at Cairo in September 1991. A meeting of the Preparatory Committee took place at Cairo from 27 to 29 April 1991, which approved a draft agenda for the Conference and other logistical matters. The conclusions of the Conference will be consolidated as a regional input for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, to be held in Brazil in 1992.

III. MEETINGS OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARIES OF THE REGIONAL COMMISSIONS

140. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 1823 (XVII) and Economic and Social Council resolution 1817 (LV) by which the Secretary-General was requested to submit annual reports on the meetings of executive secretaries of the regional commissions to the Council at its summer sessions. Since the Council's second regular session of 1990, the executive secretaries have held a meeting chaired by the Director-General for Development and International Economic Cooperation, at the United Nations Office at Vienna, from 13 to 14 March 1991. The present report reflects the main issues discussed at that meeting.

A. Regional perspectives on the International Development Strategy and social development policies (including issues related to youth and disabled persons)

141. The meeting recalled that the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade, adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 45/199 of 21 December 1990, clearly stated that the decade of the 1990s must witness a significant improvement of the human condition everywhere and establish a mutually reinforcing relationship between economic growth and human welfare. The need to strengthen this relationship is in fact a principal theme of the new Strategy. With regard to the role of the United Nations system, it was clear that there was a need and a strong desire within the system to consolidate linkages among the various bodies and agencies in the implementation of the Strategy. Regional aspects of the Strategy would be particularly important, and the regional commissions had a vital role to play in its implementation.

142. The meeting discussed the social consequences of economic development and change. Negative social consequences were noted in countries and regions where there was economic stagnation and also in some countries with rapid economic growth. In Latin America, economic stagnation had resulted in increasing social problems and strained services. Unemployment and underemployment had increased, and many countries had witnessed a marked reversal in income distribution and increases in the incidence of poverty since the 1970s. There was a general deterioration in the quality of social services many Governments were able to provide at precisely the time when more people were making demands of those services. At the same time, however, Governments had learned to target services better, had taken some innovative approaches and had endorsed the idea of establishing social development funds.

143. In Asia and the Pacific, it was observed that economic growth by itself was insufficient to achieve development. In fact, strong and successful economic growth had worsened social conditions in many places. Growth had not had a significant impact on the number of absolute poor in the region, and attempts to achieve development would be in vain if absolute poverty were not reduced. Worsening income distribution had also resulted in turbulence which

could create violent reactions among people whose expectations had risen. Unless the question of distributive justice were addressed, the gains from economic growth would not just be limited but might actually cause unrest.

144. In Europe, recent sweeping economic and political changes were having enormous social consequences. In one part of the region there was a move towards economic integration, while in another part of the region the move was away from centrally planned and towards market economies. Both movements were having social consequences, sometimes severe and often unexpected. A major concern involved the potential for mass movements of peoples across borders in search of better lives. The magnitude of the social impact of the decisions taken were only gradually becoming apparent. New thinking and, sometimes, new definitions were required; countries which had reached a certain level of economic development and social security were now seen to have far-reaching problems often akin to those of the developing regions.

145. For Western Asia, the crisis in the Gulf had already had unimaginable consequences. While the economic impact of the hostilities and the ensuing destruction was vast, many of the economic problems could be overcome and the set-backs made up. The social impact, however, was potentially far more serious. The psychological effects of war and destruction, the losses faced by migrant workers who had been evacuated, the impact of the loss or disabling of family members, and the fear of retribution all give reason for concern. It was suggested that a United Nations plan of action to assist the war region, particularly concentrating on problems of social dimensions, should be drawn up.

146. Strong concerns were expressed regarding the resources available for social development activities. Social issues and problems increasingly were calling for attention, and yet sufficient resources had not yet been allocated. The meeting noted that if social problems were not sufficiently dealt with, there was the possibility that increased conflict and unrest would result. Limited staff resources meant that, in order to deal with specific social questions or the concerns of certain social groups, staff were constantly having to take up new assignments, either interrupting their ongoing work or increasing their already heavy burden.

147. The question of implementing and making effective the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade was raised. It was recognized that, foremost, the Strategy should be understood for what it was: a political document which spells out a certain understanding within the international community about development. It does not set out goals, techniques and approaches, leaving that task to individual Governments and international bodies and agencies. Instead it consolidates and reinforces the emerging consensus concerning questions of development and provides a context for actions already being undertaken. Thus the Strategy should be understood as a strategy and not a programme of action. Therefore, each Government and agency would need to develop its own strategy, and the regional commissions had an important role to play in developing regional strategies or approaches.

148. The meeting briefly discussed the role of the regional commissions in the evaluation of the Strategy. In order to determine the effectiveness of the Strategy its impact on the recipients of programmes and activities had to be evaluated. The regional commissions might consider how they could best encourage and undertake such an evaluation. In order to be able to translate the Strategy into appropriate tactics, it was extremely important that the experiences of the recipients of development activities be recorded. What were the results of the programmes and activities implemented by the United Nations? The mere expenditure of budgeted sums was not the appropriate measure of implementation.

149. A general concern of the meeting was the question of the integration of activities for economic and social development. It was acknowledged that the two should be intertwined, leading to a comprehensive or "holistic" approach to development. No real development could take place unless social goals and strategies were embedded at the heart of all development strategies. Sectoral social policies tacked on to economic plans were insufficient; social policies needed to be an integral part of all national planning. It must also be recognized that appropriate social policies could actually result in improved economic performance and growth.

150. The need for improved coordination of activities was stressed. From the standpoint of institutional coordination within the United Nations system, certain anomalies were noted. On the one hand, at the global level, presumably in the interest of encouraging social development, social policies and activities had been bureaucratically separated from the broader development context in which activities were generally implemented. One office became the focal point for social development within the system. On the other hand, at the level of the regional commissions, the policy was to adopt a holistic approach towards development, and social social objectives were diffused in all programme activities. The problem was not, of course, insurmountable, as both needs were valid. It was pointed out that the need for a holistic approach to development did not require a unified bureaucratic structure. Indeed, very often where social and economic questions were dealt with jointly, the social concerns were submerged and lost in the economic ones.

151. Coordination should be strengthened both among the regional commissions and between the commissions and the United Nations Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs. Improved coordination could encourage joint activities and lead to an improved exchange of information among regions; there was general agreement that regions could learn a great deal from the experiences of others. It was not sufficient, however, to coordinate activities. More importantly, there was a need to jointly review the conceptual framework in which activities are undertaken. It was considered important for the United Nations to speak with one voice on social issues and to agree to common goals.

152. The question was also raised as to how the international organizations of the United Nations system and, in particular, the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, with its responsibilities for the

implementation of global programmes for specific social groups, could appropriately and effectively define their role in a regional context. The executive secretaries welcomed the opportunity for increased collaboration with the Centre. In particular, heightened cooperation was foreseen in the planning and preparation of conferences and seminars, in sharing information and experience and in technical cooperation activities. Particular mention was made of the cooperation from the Centre in the forthcoming Fourth Ministerial Meeting on Social Welfare and Social Development, to be convened in Manila from 7 to 11 October 1991.

153. The meeting endorsed the following concrete proposals for increased cooperation between regional commissions and the Centre:

(a) Improved planning and coordination of implementation of medium-term plans and biennial programme budgets:

(i) Introduction of annual consultations among the executive secretaries and other concerned senior officials on social development issues and trends, perhaps in connection with the first regular session of the Economic and Social Council;

(ii) Expanded working-level consultations on draft programme budget proposals;

(iii) Increased consultation on proposals of the Secretary-General for action in the social field and more timely exchanges of relevant resolutions and decisions of intergovernmental bodies;

(iv) Systematic exchanges of programme performance reports which have implications for joint action;

(b) Improved preparation of substantive documentation:

(i) Increased working-level exchanges of documentation proposals and outlines for review, comment and contribution, as appropriate, of relevant substantive material;

(ii) The inclusion of budgetary provisions for regional-level input in both interregional technical meetings and inter-agency meetings;

(iii) Increased region-specific input for substantive documentation, preparations for global events and their follow-up, and formulation of long-term strategies;

(iv) Exploration of opportunities for short-term exchanges of staff to work on specific substantive tasks as means to reinforce capacities existing at the office concerned;

(c) Expanded programme of technical cooperation in the social field:

(i) Increased joint planning and organization of operational activities for development, in the light of the increasing tendency of Governments to execute technical cooperation projects funded from the UNDP indicative planning figure;

(ii) Increased role of joint advisory missions to requesting Governments;

(iii) Increased use of trust fund resources administered by the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs to support catalytic and innovative action of benefit to specific social groups.

B. Regional cooperation for the advancement of women

154. As mandated by a number of resolutions of the United Nations and embodied in the System-wide Medium-term Plan for Women in Development, the promotion of the advancement of women in society is a priority concern for all bodies and agencies in the United Nations system, including the regional commissions. Except ECE, each regional commission has programmes on women in development. The desire for strengthened cooperation in all areas relevant to the advancement of women was stressed, as was the scarcity of resources. The meeting concentrated on two areas for cooperation: the role of women in the informal sector and regional preparatory meetings for the 1995 World Conference on Women.

155. The meeting discussed the cooperation which existed for a number of years between the regional commissions and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and endorsed the proposals for parallel programming between the organizations presented to the meeting by the regional commissions and INSTRAW. These proposals call for parallel regional activities pertaining to each of the five regional commissions related to the role of women in the informal sector.

156. The meeting emphasized that regional preparatory meetings were important for the effective preparations of the 1995 Conference, as was the case for the Nairobi Conference. The meeting noted the serious lack of financial resources and the difficulties in obtaining regular budget resources for those meetings. It therefore stressed the importance of the mobilization of extrabudgetary resources for that purpose.

C. Regional aspects of the System-wide Plan of Action in Drug Abuse Control and related resources required

157. The meeting recalled that in order to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the United Nations structure for drug abuse control, the General Assembly had, in its resolution 45/179 of 21 December 1990, established the United Nations International Drug Control Programme. The meeting was informed about the approach and time-frame to integrate the functions and structure of the three drug units into a single drug control programme. It was observed

that the Secretary-General, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 45/179, had appointed an Under-Secretary-General with the exclusive responsibility for coordinating and providing effective leadership for all United Nations drug control activities, in order to ensure coherence of actions within the Programme as well as coordination, complementarity and non-duplication of such activities across the United Nations system.

158. The meeting noted that while the United Nations was experiencing financial difficulties, Member States had endeavoured, at the global level, to provide additional resources to the drug control programme. That, together with the restructured Programme, was seen as a unique opportunity to enhance the credibility and effectiveness of the United Nations in addressing a multifaceted problem affecting all countries. The importance of effective and concerted action at all levels - national, regional and international - the sound utilization of resources and the need to avoid duplication through a healthy distribution of tasks were emphasized.

159. The meeting recognized the urgent need for the regional commissions to become more involved in addressing the economic and social aspects of drug abuse, illicit traffic, transit, illicit crop cultivation, crop substitution and alternative programmes of development through joint programmes and to cooperate closely with the new Programme in the effective implementation of the mandates contained in the System-wide Plan and the Global Programme. It noted, however, that the regional commissions had so far not been allocated additional resources to carry out those new mandates. It therefore stressed the importance of allocating resources for the regional commissions in order to support activities at the regional level which would complement work undertaken at the global level.

D. International migration

160. The meeting recognized that international migration was an increasingly important problem in all regions of the world. Governments were showing great interest in the subject. Governments looked to the United Nations to play a greater role in that area. International migration was, therefore, one of the theme topics for the 1994 International Conference on Population. All participants agreed that the United Nations should first and foremost concentrate on the substantive aspects in order to avoid the politicization of the subject. It should therefore undertake substantive studies on such issues as recent trends and patterns in international migration by major types of migrants, the impact of international migration on countries of destination and origin, social, economic, demographic and institutional issues and international migration issues and programmes. Although the determinants of international migration, such as political upheaval and emerging economic environments, were global in nature, the nature and magnitude of the flows differed from region to region. In recent years, the prosperity of Western Europe has attracted migrant workers from North Africa and more recently also from Eastern Europe. The Gulf crisis had created disruptions in the flow of migrant workers from Asia and Africa, while the flow of Jewish migrants from

the Soviet Union to Israel has reached unprecedented proportions. Intraregional migration, refugee movements and permanent flows to developed countries for economic reasons played a major role in Africa, Asia and the Pacific and Latin America. The meeting therefore agreed that the regional commissions should play an important role in United Nations activities to shed more light in that area. In fact, international migration should be a logical choice for interregional cooperation.

161. The meeting was informed that an expert group meeting, jointly organized by UNFPA and ECE, would take place in Geneva from 16 to 19 July 1991. It would bring together some 16 leading experts in international migration from all parts of the world, along with representatives from the regional commissions, other United Nations offices, major intergovernmental bodies and selected non-governmental organizations. ESCAP and ESCWA were planning to cooperate on a policy-oriented study on the recent disruption caused by the Gulf crisis of the stock and flow of Asian migrant workers to Iraq and Kuwait. The meeting felt that those first steps should lead to more collaborative action among the regional commissions and UNFPA and other relevant bodies, notably the International Labour Organisation (ILO), which had done a great deal of work in that area.

E. Preparations for the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development

162. The meeting was briefed on the preparations for the 1994 International Meeting on Population and Development which, after approval by the Economic and Social Council, is to be called the International Conference on Population and Development. The decision to change the title of the Conference reflects the strong recognition of the importance of population issues, particularly as a key component of development strategies and programmes. The meeting was informed of and briefly discussed the objectives of the Conference and the overall theme of the Conference, which will be population, sustained economic growth and sustainable development, as well as the six groups of population issues identified by the Preparatory Committee.

163. The meeting emphasized that the Conference should be seen as a joint undertaking by the United Nations Department of International Economic and Social Affairs, the regional commissions and UNFPA. During the meeting of the Preparatory Committee, delegations further emphasized that the role of the regional commissions in this process was most important. The regional commissions were invited to convene, as soon as possible, regional meetings or conferences which would review the experience on population policies and programmes in their respective regions and propose future actions, as part of their contribution to the preparatory activities of the Conference.

164. Concerning the financing of the regional preparatory meetings, the participants noted that some Governments at the preparatory meeting were of the view that all conference-related activities should be financed from the United Nations regular budget, as was now the case for the 1992 United Nations

Conference on Environment and Development. The meeting reiterated, however, that UNFPA was co-sponsoring and providing funding for the Asia and Pacific Conference and that discussions were under way with ECA and ECLAC and would take place with ECE and ESCWA on how UNFPA could collaborate with the commissions on the convening of regional conferences or meetings in their respective regions.

F. Interregional cooperation in transport matters

165. The meeting recalled that there had been a long tradition of cooperation among the regional commissions in transport matters and that the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) had made useful contributions in its area of competence. Meetings of the transport directors of regional commissions were held in 1977, 1984 and, most recently, in May 1988. The results of the 1988 meeting, which included a number of concrete interregional projects, were endorsed by the meeting of executive secretaries and sent to the Economic and Social Council as background material for its in-depth discussion on regional cooperation. The meeting decided that the transport directors of the regional commissions should meet on a biennial basis to review in greater depth the possibilities for interregional cooperation in a more practical manner. Meanwhile, it was agreed that there should be a renewed attempt, with the assistance of the Director-General, to revive the carefully developed projects in 1988 for financing by UNDP under its interregional programme.

G. International trade facilitation

166. The meeting recalled the in-depth discussion at the Economic and Social Council on international trade facilitation under the item on regional cooperation both in 1989 and 1990. The discussions in the Council were based on intensive discussions by the directors of trade of the regional commissions, in cooperation with UNCTAD, which had culminated in a carefully prepared project document containing concrete proposals for interregional cooperation in international trade facilitation. The project document was endorsed by the meeting of the executive secretaries in Baghdad, in May 1990, and was submitted to the Council as stipulated in its resolution 1989/118. The project document was endorsed by the meeting of executive secretaries in Santiago in 1989 and sent to the Council for approval. The Council, however, in its resolution 1989/188, requested that the regional commissions go back to their legislative bodies to obtain endorsements for that project document and report back to the Council. The regional commissions did so, but the action taken differed from commission to commission according to the tradition of each. ECE and ECA adopted resolutions endorsing the project, whereas ESCAP, according to its tradition, obtained the endorsement of its Commission as part of its annual report. The Economic and Social Council adopted resolution 1990/74, which limits the support of the Council to the ECA dimension of the project. It is hoped that this year the Council will find it possible to endorse the project for interregional cooperation among the five regional commissions.

H. Restructuring the economic and social sectors of the United Nations

167. The meeting was informed of the preparations for the forthcoming resumed session of the General Assembly on the restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations.

IV. INTERREGIONAL COOPERATION IN TRADE FACILITATION

A. Background

168. It is recalled that, at its second regular session in July 1990, the Economic and Social Council considered a draft proposal for interregional cooperation in the area of trade facilitation and, in particular, the phased application of EDIFACT whenever appropriate. The draft proposal had been formulated by the secretariats of the regional commissions jointly with the UNCTAD secretariat.

169. Prior to its discussion by the Council, the proposal had received the widespread support of member Governments in those regional commissions that had held plenary meetings in 1990. Thus, in April 1990, ECE decision J(45) concerning EDIFACT recalled decision L(44) in which the Commission had supported cooperative activities at the regional and interregional levels for international trade facilitation and promotion of UN/EDIFACT. The ECA ministerial conference in May 1990 adopted resolution 693(19) endorsing the proposal. The ECLAC commission session, in May 1990, took note of the full report on the project presented by the Secretariat. In June 1990 ESCAP, at its forty-sixth session, endorsed the project concept and the objectives enumerated in the proposal. It went on record as follows:

> "... Recognizing that trade facilitation measures would be viable only if they were accepted and applied uniformly on a world-wide basis, it considered that interregional cooperation in the field was a step in the right direction. The Commission, therefore, observed that Economic and Social Council resolution 1989/118 on that subject was pertinent and timely. It endorsed the project concept and objectives for interregional cooperation in trade facilitation as enumerated in the secretariat document. In that context, the United Nations Rules for Electronic Data Interchange for Administration, Commerce and Transport (UN/EDIFACT) were considered to be the future direction for conducting trade transactions, and it was observed that the developing countries should take steps to acquaint themselves with that new technological development in conducting international trade in order to derive maximum benefits from the projects being developed in that area."

This endorsement of the proposed project by the Commission was duly reflected in the report on regional cooperation (document E/1990/84) presented to the Council in 1990.

170. However, due to the reservations expressed by a number of delegations, who said that the proposal had not been endorsed formally by all the regional commissions, the Council did not approve the interregional project in its entirety; Council decision 1990/74, as adopted, limited the support of the Council to the ECA dimension of the project. Efforts in the course of the discussion to obtain a wording that would support a broader interregional approach did, however, result in the addition of paragraph 6, which envisaged further consideration of Council resolution 1989/118 by the regional commissions other than ECA before the Council's second regular session of 1991.

B. Implementation of Economic and Social Council resolution 1990/74

171. In response to Economic and Social Council resolution 1990/74, ESCAP, at its forty-seventh session held in April 1991, adopted resolution 47/11 which fully supported the project. The full text of this resolution appears in part I.A of the present report and requires action by the Council. The resolution provides clear evidence of the interest of the ESCAP member States in the subject. The Commission noted the usefulness of the activities of the secretariat aimed at creating better appreciation among developing countries of trade facilitation measures in streamlining trade and customs procedures, especially in the context of new and emerging technologies, such as EDIFACT. It also endorsed the formal establishment of the ESCAP regional trade facilitation network and urged the countries of the region to establish national trade facilitation bodies or similar arrangements which could form part of the network.

172. The adoption by the Council of resolution 1990/74 in support of ECA resolution 693 (XXV) is quite significant. First of all, it reiterates Council resolution 1989/118 on international cooperation for facilitation of international trade, in which the regional commissions, together with UNCTAD, were requested to prepare jointly a project proposal in this field. To a large extent, the implementation of the EDIFACT project will depend, as stated in Council resolution 1990/74, on donors coming forward to support the activities. Second, it reiterates the full recognition, inter alia, of the need for effective cooperation between Africa and the rest of the world, in addition to calling for facilitating Africa's effective participation in international trade, including the use of electronic data interchange for the transmission of trade documentation.

173. Pending the adoption by the Council of the interregional project for all regions, ECA continued to pursue regional cooperation activities in trade facilitation. Work on trade facilitation at the regional level is closely linked with efforts aimed at enhancing intra-African economic cooperation and integration, pursuant to the Lagos Plan of Action and the African Alternative Framework for Structural Adjustment Programme for Socio-Economic Recovery and Transformation. Recently, also, pursuant to the Strategies for Revitalization, Recovery and Growth of Africa's Trade in the 1990s and Beyond (document E/ECA/TRADE/89/25/Rev.5), as was adopted by the Special Session of

the Conference of African Ministers of Trade in December 1990, the matter is being vigorously pursued.

174. Parallel with the above, ECA, in collaboration with ITC, the Preference Trade Area of Eastern and Southern Africa (PTA), the Eastern and Southern African Management Institute (ESAMI), the Eastern and Southern African Trade Promotion and Training Centre, held a consultative meeting in Lusaka from 24 to 25 January 1991 to consider trade-related human resources development in Eastern and Southern Africa.

175. At its resumed forty-fifth session, held in December 1990, ECE, in decision 0 (45) decided that trade facilitation constituted a priority area of activity; moreover, paragraph (d) of section IV of decision 0 (45) states the following:

> "The Commission invites the Executive Secretary to undertake cooperation and coordination with the other regional commissions of the United Nations, and with other international organizations active in the field of trade facilitation, and requests him to submit proposals for any interregional project to the Working Party (on Facilitation of International Trade Procedures) and to the Commission for discussion and decision."

176. Pursuant to that decision, the draft proposal on interregional cooperation in the area of trade facilitation, and in particular the phased application of EDIFACT whenever appropriate was submitted by the secretariat to the thirty-third session of the Working Party on Facilitation of International Trade Procedures (12-15 March 1991) for discussion. In its report the Working Party recognized that trade facilitation and UN/EDIFACT were global objectives requiring interregional cooperation; it went on to recommend that all possible implications of the interregional project for ECE secretariat resources should be considered carefully. At its forty-sixth session in April 1991, the Commission agreed that a solid foundation for UN/EDIFACT at the regional level should be created before proceeding to the global application of EDIFACT. It was further noted that the training component of the regional project was applicable to, and a desirable objective for, the ECE economies in transition and for other ECE member countries where international facilitation of trade procedures was still at an early stage. Support was expressed for those objectives, provided that staff and other resources required could be obtained from funding organizations and voluntary donations and did not require the use of regular ECE resources available for the development of the activities of the Working Party.

177. ESCWA had included an item on international cooperation in trade facilitation in the agenda for its sixteenth session, which was scheduled to be held in April 1991. However, due to the crisis in the Gulf, the session was postponed by the Council until next year. ECLAC did not meet in 1991. It is clear that the project received widespread support in the commission which met in 1990 and 1991. It is, therefore, hoped that the Economic and Social Council is now in the position to fully endorse efforts made by the regional

commissions to promote interregional cooperation in this important area for the benefit of all regions and countries.

V. STRENGTHENING THE ROLE OF THE REGIONAL COMMISSIONS

A. The regional commissions and the restructuring process

178. The issues related to the strengthening of the role of the regional commissions within the United Nations system must be viewed in the broader context of the current collective effort to restructure the economic and social sectors as a whole. On the one hand, those issues should contribute to enhancing the effectiveness of the system vis-à-vis the most salient items of the new development agenda, such as the globalization of certain critical problems related to sustainable development, the impact of technological innovation, the persistence of poverty and the new institutional requirements to cope with the efficient management of economic and social processes.

179. On the other hand, regardless of the final shape and content of the restructuring process, the regional dimension will no doubt play a salient role, given the inherent advantages of bringing the Organization's activities closer to the field. Furthermore, many, if not all, of the critical development problems prominent in the new agenda for action, are of a cross-sectoral nature, both for analytical and policy-oriented purposes. Consequently, the quality of the United Nations delivery in the economic and social sectors will depend in no small measure on the degree to which the operational activities of the system are conceived, programmed and implemented within an integrated and multidisciplinary framework that is central to the regional approach.

180. Indeed, the nature of the regional commissions and the role they are called upon to play within the United Nations system are based on the contribution they can make to such an integrated and multidisciplinary framework. Their comparative advantages in this respect have been consistently recognized by the concerned legislative bodies of the system. A regional approach has become increasingly important in terms of dealing with differentiated social and economic problems and as a basis for concerted action among Member States in the face of new challenges raised by global trends and problems. As a further advantage of the regional approach, it should be noted that it not only allows for the identification of issues peculiar to each region but also for those of common concern between regions.

181. Therefore, global strategies will obtain much of their relevance and thrust from regional and subregional analysis and insights. The implementation of such strategies requires a close interaction between analysis and technical cooperation capabilities, and will have a greater country relevance if they are interpreted through regional and subregional perspectives. A concrete illustration of the above can be found in the highly uneven growth rates observed for different regions during the past decades, especially during the 1980s. The decade was generally recognized as a "lost

decade" in both Latin America and Africa. However, during the same period, Asia's experience was mixed; while some of the Asian countries experienced unprecedented growth rates, others - especially the least developed, land-locked and island developing countries - faced stagnation or even decline. Regional commissions were able to respond to the problems created by these differentiated growth patterns. For example, ECLAC and ECA have demonstrated the importance of their role in dealing with issues of external debt and economic recovery in their respective regions. ESCAP reoriented its programmes with a view to spreading the growth momentum to those countries lagging behind and accelerating the overall process of development in its region.

182. In the case of ECE, the dynamics of change in Europe, characterized by profound and rapid reforms in Central and Eastern Europe and by the process of economic integration and enhanced regional cooperation in Western Europe, has redefined the role of ECE, underscoring its dual capacity as both a United Nations body, serving as a bridge between other institutions and the Organization's programmes, and as a European institution. Likewise, in Western Asia, ESCWA can and should play an important role in the reconstruction and development of the region.

183. The capacity of the regional commissions to strengthen the mutually reinforcing influence between substantive analysis and technical cooperation has also been recognized, in view of the greater proximity they have to the countries in their regions. A clear indication of this capacity is to be found in the increasing demands for delivery of tehnical cooperation that are being made on the regional commissions by the Governments of the developing countries they serve.

184. In spite of the general thrust of the restructuring process, as described in the preceding paragraphs, there have been some organizational trends in the last few years that appear to have a divergent orientation in so far as they bear directly on the role of the regional commissions. Historically, this role was not defined once and for all in a particular legislative decision, but rather evolved as a result of a consensus that was worked out in consultation with the regional commissions themselves, the central organs of the system and the specialized agencies. In the past years, however, divergent trends have appeared that point towards greater centralization of the system in its decision-making processes. These trends were reflected in operational exercises initially triggered by drastic emergency measures that had to be adopted in the context of the recent profound financial crisis. Many of the recommended measures, such as post reduction, retrenchment, recruitment freeze and vacancy management, affected the whole system and naturally had a strong impact on the regional commissions as well.

B. The contribution of the regional commissions

1. General background

185. The role of the regional commissions is spelled out most clearly in section IV of the annex to General Assembly resolution 32/197. Further mention of the commissions is made in section VI, where it is noted that "interagency coordination at the intersecretariat level should be pursued with full respect for the competence, where relevant, of the regional commissions ...". The commissions are given no role in section V on operational activities; neither in section VI, which involves programming, planning, budgeting and evaluation nor in section VIII, which outlines the various secretariat support services to be provided by the United Nations Secretariat.

186. In General Assembly resolution 33/202, adopted in the following year, the commissions were provided a limited role as executing agencies in operational activities. No further formal evolution in the role of the commissions has occurred since that time.

187. Despite the limited role given to the regional commissions as executing agencies, their role in and contributions to operational activities for development in most cases have steadily increased and, by now, have become quite sizeable as compared with the regular budget resources. This reflects a growing demand for their multidisciplinary services and a desire on the part of the member countries to utilize their potentials in strengthening regional economic cooperation.

188. Recent concern about the role of the regional commissions has centred on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 44/211, which directly affects section V of Assembly resolution 32/197. The essence of the resolution is the so-called decentralization of operational activities to the country level. Decentralization, in this case, involves "the delegation from headquarters (or regional) level to the country level, of various elements of authority for preparation and approval of operational programmes and projects for development at that country level, and the concomitant strengthening of the system's country-level capacities therefor". 19/

189. The 17th meeting of the Conference of African Ministers, concerned that the decentralization process of the 1970s and the inherent focus on the regional dimensions of development has been greatly reversed, adopted, on 13 May 1991, resolution 718 (XXVI) on the revitalization of the mandate and operational framework of the Economic Commission for Africa. The full text of this resolution appears in part I.B of the present report. The resolution, inter alia, invites the Director-General for Development and International Economic Cooperation to consider convening an ad hoc group meeting of high-level experts drawn from the respective regions in the second half of

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19/ A/45/273/Add.5, para. 6.

1991 to discuss the revision of the mandate of the regional commissions and thus provide an intellectual input into the current process of restructuring and decentralizing United Nations assistance to the countries of the regions.

190. Over the years, the regional commissions have sought to develop a wide range of activities in the economic and social sectors in keeping with their role as the main general economic and social development centres. Their in-house multidisciplinary capability has always been a special asset enabling them to undertake interdisciplinary issues for in-depth considertaion. This has also equipped them to carry out, to a certain extent, although not always without difficulty, the responsibility assigned to them by the General Assembly for coordinating various activities and for exercising their role as "team leader".

2. Relationship with agencies

191. As stated, the experience of the regional commissions in the exercise of their role as "team leader" has been mixed. The experience has also varied from discipline to discipline even within the same location. Various means and mechanisms have been tried to enable a coordinated and coherent approach to dealing with problems faced by the countries at the regional level and to providing necessary support and assistance to them in that regard. The scope for further strengthening the relationship of cooperation exists. Based on the experience so far, the regional commissions believe that closer coordination between them and the agencies could continue to be maintained and strengthened through the greater use of established mechanisms of joint divisions, units and similar arrangements. Technical missions and inter-agency groups could be established for special programmes. Generally, coordination with agencies has proven to be effective when it is institutionalized through joint staff arrangements.

192. In order to help improve coordination and avoid duplication of functions, General Assembly resolution 32/197 urged the organizations of the United Nations system to achieve a common definition of regions and identical locations of regional and subregional offices. In the light of this, it would appear advisable for specialized agencies of the United Nations system to locate their regional and subregional offices in the same cities as the regional commissions. At the same time, it would seem advisable for those specialized agencies establishing or strengthening their regional offices anew to do so in close consultation with the regional commissions, which would pave the way for greater functional cooperation in the future. In this regard, any arrangement should be based on mutually supportive mandates.

3. Relationship with funding agencies

193. The relationship between the regional commissions and the funding agencies of the United Nations system is particularly important, taking into account the history of mutually supportive activities carried out to the

benefit and satisfaction of member Governments over several decades by the commissions, particularly with such bodies as UNDP and UNFPA.

194. In certain cases, potential for conflict in jurisdiction and responsibility could arise if the traditional role and mandate of the regional commissions are threatened by the efforts of global bodies to extend or strengthen their regional presence. The problem and difficulties faced in this regard are particularly pronounced in the field of operational activities for development.

195. One of these difficulties involves differences in emphasis in development priorities. Different priorities have sometimes emerged from within various organizations serving the same countries, creating confusion among the Governments, despite the fact that all are at the service of the same member Governments. Greater coordination would appear necessary, particularly when regional projects and activities are submitted to Governments for approval.

196. Another issue is the need to eliminate any impression vis-à-vis member Governments that the secretariats of the regional commissions and the funding agencies are in competition. The image which needs to be projected is that all are equal partners, each with a role to play in the development process, and all at the service of the needs of the Governments.

197. This raises the issue of the role and jurisdiction of the regional commissions and the funding agencies and underlines the need to agree on mutually supportive roles. In this regard, the regional commissions take General Assembly resolution 32/197 as the most complete definition of the member States' wishes concerning the organization's activities in the economic and social fields. Certain responsibilities, such as the organization of regional seminars, the execution of regional projects and regional intergovernmental meetings on subjects in the economic and social fields, are clearly within the mandate of the regional commissions. There is growing concern, however, that by increasing their in-house expertise and acquiring the same intersectoral and multidisciplinary characteristics as the regional commissions, the funding agencies will inevitably produce duplication of effort and create competition among secretariats.

198. Of no less concern in the relationship with the funding organizations has been a recent tendency on their part to organize substantive conferences and meetings at regional levels of a nature directly duplicating the traditional role and mandate of the regional commissions. Thus, there is a need for reconfirming the respective mandates in a way that the two sets of organizations under the United Nations can fully complement each other and are able to abide by the decisions received from their respective policy-making bodies (commission and governing council) without infringing on each other's areas of competence.

199. One of the problems which is being addressed is successor arrangements for support costs for UNFPA.

200. One very basic question that has been encountered by the regional commissions in recent years in their relationship with the funding bodies, such as UNDP and UNFPA, relates to the nature of their respective roles as mandated by the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Conuncil. The general premise has been that in the interest of efficiency and economy, the mobilization of resources should be left to a few organizations, such as UNDP, UNFPA and the World Food Programme (WFP), and that substantive work should be assigned to others. This understanding is reinforced by the fact that the annual pledging conference convened at Headquarters is done on behalf of the United Nations. The two sets of organizations would work complementarily with each other in responding to the needs of member countries. However, often the resolutions adopted by the ministers meeting in their commission sessions or other ministerial meetings are unable to elicit positive responses from the funding organizations.

4. Regional preparatory meetings for United Nations world conferences

201. In General Assembly resolution 32/197, part IV states that the regional commissions should act as "the main general economic and social development centres within the United Nations system for their respective regions". They "should provide inputs for the global policy-making processes of the competent United Nations organs". This fact points to the need to strengthen the regional commissions' representation and consultations in policy-making bodies so as to give a better opportunity for regional economic and social perspectives to be taken into full consideration in the global conferences and policy-making processes. However, the regional commissions have often felt constrained to make their contributions to such process for lack of resources. It would, therefore, be desirable that the regional commissions be provided with the necessary financial support to enable them to prepare inputs for the policy-making processes and conferences at the global level. It may be recalled, in this connection, that the practice of holding regional preparatory meetings for world conferences or follow-up meetings to these events, convened by regional commissions, has been well-established for many years. This positive tradition should be sustained to enable the regional perspective to be effectively incorporated in global events, and the regional commissions should be enabled to do so.

C. Other issues in operational activities for development

202. The development activities of the United Nations should not be fragmented in such a way that individual national efforts negate one another. It is necessary to strengthen activities which lend themselves to a regional/subregional approach, given the emerging trends towards promotion of cooperation among countries at the regional level.

203. While there are importart issues which can only be handled globally, the vast majority of intercountry issues in the economic and social sectors can

best be handled at the regional and subregional levels. In serving the developing countries, the programmes in these fields should be increasingly decentralized and operationalized in keeping with emerging trends. In decentralizing programmes, global activities should concentrate upon effective policy coordination and guidance, fully recognizing the competence of the regional commissions in performing the role of intergovernmental forums in setting priorities and determining the most relevant activities to meet their needs in respective regions. The continued duplication of efforts, particularly at the level of technical advisory services, give cause for concern.

204. It is increasingly being recognized that the issues of development are multidisciplinary and need comprehensive treatment. This growing awareness augurs well for the regional commissions in view of their in-house multidisciplinary capabilities and their experience over a period of four decades in dealing with cross-sectoral issues of development. Indeed, increasingly, the regional commissions are being called upon by the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council to undertake activities in various areas requiring multidisciplinary treatment which have not been their traditional fields of activity.

205. Some recent examples of additional activities sought to be carried out by the regional commissions are embodied in the following resolutions: General Assembly resolution 43/140: Regional arrangements for the promotion and protection of human rights in the Asian and Pacific region; General Assembly resolution 44/226: Traffic in and disposal, control and transboundary movements of toxic and dangerous products and wastes; General Assembly resolution 44/236: International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction; Economic and Social Council resolution 1989/118: Interregional cooperation for facilitation of international trade. In addition, the regional commissions were urged to address the needs and problems of the least developed countries.

206. While welcoming the trust reposed in the capabilities of the regional commissions by these highest forums, two facts are striking: first, in assigning the new responsibilities, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council have not given consideration as to how resources for carrying out the assigned tasks would be mobilized, nor have they made provision for additional resources to be allocated to the regional commissions for the purpose; second, the regional commissions are not being consulted to elicit their capability and determine the priorities by their membership at the regional level.

207. It is quite evident from the emphasis being given to the multisectoral and multidisciplinary dimensions in country development plans and programmes that the decades of experience which the regional commissions have accumulated in dealing with interdisciplinary and intersectoral aspects would be in high demand. Perhaps, this new orientation towards the means of achieving objectives of the developing countries augurs well for taking a new look as to how to implement a recommendation put forward by a consultant commissioned by

the Director-General for Development and International Economic Cooperation in 1987. That recommendation stated that the regional commissions should have the first option as executing agent for all regional technical cooperation projects in their regions, while recognizing the special competence of the specialized agencies of the United Nations and of the Department of Technical Cooperation for Development. The recommendation further stated that the commissions should also be executing agents for those national technical cooperation projects which are central to their interdisciplinary objectives and for which they have substantive expertise.

D. Procedural rationalization

208. There is a concurrent need to examine the areas of programming and administrative and management practices to strengthen the capability of the regional commissions to respond more effectively to the needs of their member countries. The following points, though not exhaustive, are pertinent and should merit consideration:

(a) The present system of vacancy management has an inherent disadvantage for the regional commissions in the sense that it tends to take away from the best talents from the regional commissions towards Headquarters. Thus, the overall level of professionalism in the regional commissions can be adversely affected if more opportunities are not available to replenish their human resources by a fresh infusion from outside sources and seats of learning;

(b) For years, the regional commissions sought to impress upon United Nations Headquarters that the programming priorities for regional programmes in the various regions are different since the felt needs of the memberships are different. Being away from Headquarters, the regional perspectives are rot often reflected when uniform sets of priorities for economic and social development work in all the developing regions are established. In view of the fact that the objective conditions of the countries and the regions are divergent, priority-setting for programming should fully reflect the views of the regional commissions themselves;

(c) While certain matters have been decentralized to the regional commissions, there are other areas where some further delegation of authority could be considered. These are:

(i) Establishment of bank accounts of outposted centres/institutes financed by project funds;

(ii) Recruitment of all Professionsl staff up to P-5 level;

(iii) Extension of Professional appointments at all levels;

(iv) Recruitment, extension and reclassification of all 200-series personnel, including the regional advisers;

(v) Acceptance and extension of experts under funds-in-trust and non-reimbursable loans;

(vi) Recruitment of associate experts;

(d) In addition, in view of the fact that the cost of travel for Member States to attend the sessions of the General Assembly are borne by that body, some budgetary provision should be made to the regional commissions to enable at least their neediest members to attend commission sessions. Their close involvement in the work of the commissions would be immensely beneficial.